the weekly
Standard

OCTOBER 26, 1998 • $3.50

FALL BOOKS
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DAVID BROOKS on the triumph of enviro-consumerism

ALSO

William Kristol: Cheer Up, Republicans!

The Editors: Kenneth Starr and His Critics

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Friends of Sidney Blumenthal

Sidney Blumenthal, special adviser to the president and first lady on the vast right-wing conspiracy, managed to raise hackles across the Atlantic with his grand-jury testimony in the Monica Lewinsky case.

As Andrew Marshall reported in the *Independent*, a London daily: "According to Mr. Blumenthal's testimony to the grand jury in the investigation by the special prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, he is in charge of the 'special relationship' and looks after relations between Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. 'He's an old friend of mine, I introduced him to the President and the First Lady, and I act as a personal liaison between the President and the Office of the Prime Minister,' Mr. Blumenthal told the investigators." As if the president of the United States and the prime minister of Great Britain needed Sid's intervention to meet.

Marshall further reported that Blumenthal's "statements about his role with Britain have not earned him many friends on either side of the Atlantic. There are plenty of other officials, like the ambassadors in London and Washington for instance, who think they handle that relationship, and regard Mr. Blumenthal as a nuisance."

Finally, a Defense Budget

Republicans may find a lot to complain about in the budget deal reached last Thursday, but three cheers are in order for the $9 billion increase in defense spending—the first increase in real dollars to defense since 1985.

The money will address long-overlooked issues such as missile defense and military readiness, though perhaps most significant is the simple fact that Congress and the Clinton administration finally acknowledged the need to spend more on national security.

According to congressional sources, the increase never would have been included in the budget had it not been for the efforts of House speaker Newt Gingrich, who overcame the strong objections of the Clinton administration and congressional Democrats. But there's much more work to be done. What's really needed is a defense budget that continues to grow, and it would be nice if others would follow Gingrich's lead in making this a priority.

Mend It, Don't End It

Sounding a Clintonian "let's put this behind us" note, the president of Iran at a press conference in late September said the Salman Rushdie affair should be regarded as "finished." President Mohammad Khatami was presumably hoping to reinforce the statement by foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi that the Iranian government would no longer try to kill the British author. Rushdie's 1989 book *The Satanic Verses* had provoked the Ayatollah Khomeini to issue a *fatwa* calling for Rushdie's execution for blasphemy. And Kharrazi's statement that the Iranian government would no longer try to enforce the *fatwa* was good enough for prime minister Tony Blair's government, which hastened to restore diplomatic relations between Britain and Iran.

That may have been premature. The rest of the Iranian establishment has also adopted a Clintonian posture towards the *fatwa*: Mend it, don't end it. The creepy Mahmoud Mohammadi, in line to be Iran's ambassador to Britain now that relations are restored, called the judgment against Rushdie "irrevocable." And the Khordad-15 Foundation, a quasi-governmental Islamic foundation in Iran that had previously publicized a $2.5 million reward for Rushdie's head, last week said it was upping the bounty by $300,000.

Most telling, perhaps, of the danger that Rushdie is still in is the position of British Airways, which unlike the British government doesn't put much stock in the moderates of Iran. According to an airline spokesman quoted in the *New York Times*, Rushdie still won't be allowed to fly on British Airways, which has banned him from its flights ever since the *fatwa* was issued.

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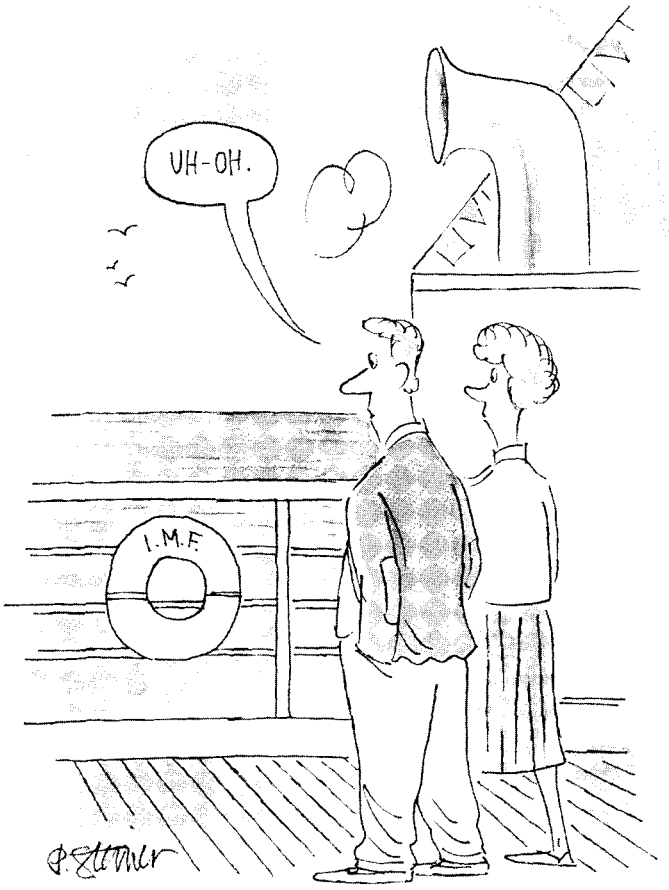
Scrapbook



"While we have every sympathy with Mr. Rushdie's difficulties with overseas travel," the spokesman said, "our ultimate responsibility is the safety of our passengers and staff." Profiles in courage.

Gore Sightings

Vice President Al Gore was featured in Republican National Committee press releases again last week—this time for getting his M states mixed up. Speaking in Minnesota, Gore talked about moving Missouri into the 21st century. The Scrapbook can sympathize, though: When all you do is travel from one fund-raiser to the next, all those states must start to look alike.

Funnier was the effort by Gore to suck up to Courtney Love, the widow of grunge-rocker Kurt Cobain, who fronts the band Hole. As reported by Love in an interview in *Spin*, Gore told Love at a Hollywood party, "I'm a really big fan." Exceptionally, Love didn't allow herself to be flattered: "I was like, 'Yeah, right. Name a song, Al.'" He flailed. The Scrapbook thinks the seminal Hole album, "Live Through This," might be most appropriate for beleaguered vice presidents.

"Victim" of the Week

According to the *New York Times*, Jeremy Strohmeyer, convicted of sexually molesting and killing a young girl in a Nevada casino, "attributed his actions to several factors: Los Angeles County officials who did not tell his adoptive parents about his mother's schizophrenia and substance abuse; a former girlfriend who drove him to drug abuse; Nevada casinos that allowed children to play at arcades; and an incompetent therapist. . . . He also criticized . . . a close friend at the time for not acting to save [the victim] when he happened on the assault."

Strohmeyer neglected to blame Ken Starr, for which he was sentenced to three life terms, to be served consecutively.

The President's Joke

A professor at a prestigious northeastern university, who asks to have his name redacted, writes in response to The Scrapbook's query about the joke that Bill Clinton told to Monica Lewinsky—"the Jewish-American princess and apple one," as it's described in the Tripp/Lewinsky transcripts:

Our correspondent writes: "Your naiveté is touching. The joke you are unaware of dates from the early 1980s. The 'apple' in question is not the forbidden fruit of the Garden of Eden, although given the context it is understandable you would make this mistake. It refers instead to the computer."

Our correspondent believes the Oval Office dialogue went like this:

Bill: What do you get if you cross a Jewish-American princess with an Apple?

Monica: What?

Bill: A computer that never goes down.

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Correspondence

High on the Hog

I enjoyed reading Tucker Carlson's article on the North Carolina Senate campaign featuring incumbent senator and hog farmer Lauch Faircloth ("Lauch 'n' Load," Oct. 12). I was a little dismayed, though, that Carlson bought the environmental lobby's party line on hog farms.

Carlson wrote that hogs produce more than four times the waste of humans—but if you look at the main pollutants in the waste, the so-called nutrients of nitrogen and phosphorous, the ratio is closer to one-and-a-half to two times. And unlike human waste, hog waste is used as fertilizer. This "recycling," which can happen only if manure is not spilled or otherwise allowed to run off, can add about $3 in revenues per hog. You do the math for the state's 10 million hogs and guess how much manure farmers let spill.

That paints a different picture of Carlson's claim that hog-manure lagoons "periodically leak into rivers and streams." Indeed, hog-farm lagoons can spill—like after a hurricane. For instance, last year's hurricanes in North Carolina caused about one-half of one percent of all the state's hog farms to spill.

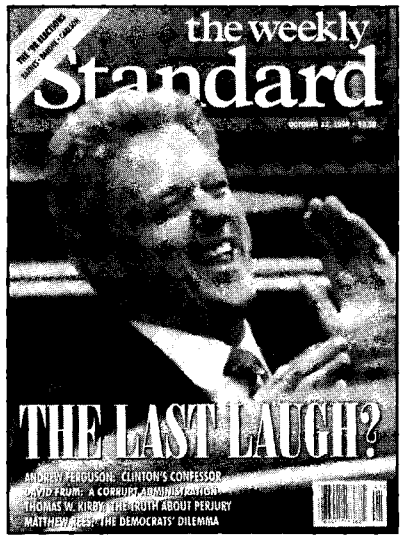
By comparison, more than two-thirds of all municipal waste-treatment plants spilled. The more important fact, however, is that hog farms by law can't discharge nutrients, but city sewage plants may do so legally. The city of Wilmington legally dumps more than 500,000 pounds of nitrogen from its sewage into the Cape Fear River annually. Conversely, because of tight manure-management controls, hog farms' use of nitrogen in the ground water in North Carolina's most intensive hog-producing region has actually decreased over the past 20 years as the hog population has grown about five-fold.

Carlson's article notes that environmental groups have denounced Faircloth—the state's fifth-largest hog farmer. He writes that "you don't have to be a wild-eyed environmentalist to have concerns about hog farming in North Carolina." You probably do have to be misinformed, however. Let's hope the voters, who do have concerns about hog production, as Carlson reports, get the right information.

DAVE JUDAY
CHURCHVILLE, VA

Where did Tucker Carlson get the idea that Lauch Faircloth is the only senator who lacks a college degree? According to Congressional Quarterly's *Who's Who in Congress 1997*, Faircloth's North Carolina colleague, Jesse Helms, also did not complete college. Neither did Conrad Burns (R-MT), Rod Grams (R-MN), or Wendell Ford (D-KY), who is retiring.

ALBERT J. MENENDEZ
GAITHERSBURG, MD



Watching Everyone

Arch Puddington harshly attacks Human Rights Watch for our recent 440-page report on police brutality in the United States ("Looking for Brutality in All the Wrong Places," Oct. 12). While Puddington commends Human Rights Watch for our landmark work in reporting on repression in countries such as China, he disparages our equally comprehensive research on rights abuses in America.

Puddington appears not to have read our report, but rather press clips about the report. Nowhere do we use the term "epidemic" to describe the problem of police abuse; indeed, one of our points is that we don't know how severe the problem is because no government agency keeps track of it, despite a legislative mandate that the Justice Department do so. Nor do we fail to note, as Puddington charges, that civil-service laws have made it harder to fire abusive police officers; we catalogue that and a range of other obstacles to holding abusive officers accountable.

The core of our report charges that authorities overlook many cases of police brutality; that's what makes it a human-rights abuse, rather than merely the criminal conduct of a few errant officers or, in Puddington's terms, a "social problem." Puddington points out that some police officers are prosecuted. But, as we show, prosecutions are almost invariably launched only after a long train of complaints that should have been dealt with earlier. The Justice Department had only 30 convictions on this score out of the nearly 11,000 civil-rights complaints filed. Many officers whose abuse is ignored go on to commit more serious abuses.

Puddington's central theme—that the United States should not be held to the same rights standards we routinely ask other nations to meet—is wrong, both legally and morally. Excessive violence tolerated by a government is a human-rights abuse, whether committed in a dictatorship or a democracy. And Human Rights Watch has the legitimacy to condemn police abuse in, say, Indonesia or Colombia, because we would do the same in the United States or the United Kingdom.

KENNETH ROTH
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
NEW YORK, NY

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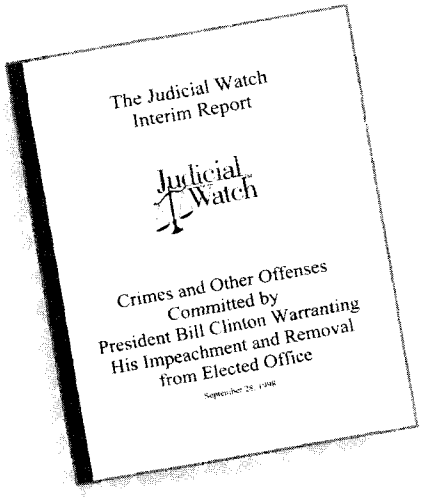
It's Not "Just About Sex"



The Judicial Watch Interim Report was formally entered into the official record of the House Judiciary Committee's impeachment hearings on October 6, 1998
(The Judicial Watch Interim Report is available on the Internet at www.judicialwatch.org)

Once the evidence was in, even Bill Clinton could no longer lie about his "improper relationship" with Monica Lewinsky. Having admitted that much, the White House and its supporters now claim that the independent counsel's investigation is "just about sex," and not a particularly serious matter at all.

Judicial Watch knows better. So do you.

The Clinton Administration has engaged in a pattern of criminal conduct, violating the rights of American citizens and endangering our national security. The **"Filegate," "Chinagate," "Trustgate," and "IRS-gate"** scandals clearly constitute "high crimes and misdemeanors" — impeachable offenses. It's about a lot more than sex.

That's why Judicial Watch has provided Congress with an Interim Report on its exhaustive investigation of the Clinton crimes and its twenty lawsuits against the Clinton Administration. We've given Congress the facts it needs to prove it's not "just about sex, stupid."

"You ain't seen nothing yet," now that Judicial Watch has delivered the real evidence to Congress.

We've accomplished more with our limited resources than Starr, Congress and the Clinton Justice Department have with their multi-million dollar budgets. We will continue to seek out the truth and bring those responsible for breaking the law and violating our rights to justice, but we need your help to do it. Won't you please make a contribution to Judicial Watch today?

Judicial Watch, Inc.
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*With a contribution of $50.00 or more, you will receive an official copy of the **Judicial Watch Interim Report***

Larry, keep up the good work.
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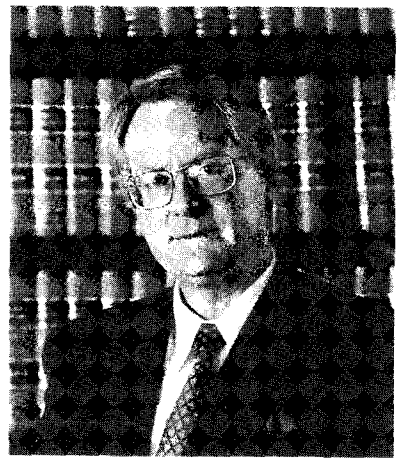

—Larry Klayman, Chairman

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Casual

Young and Old in Washington

Autumn brings out the old men here in Washington. Or maybe it's just that you notice them only after the summer tourists have all gone home. They walk in the warm afternoons down along the canal or stand inside the Lincoln Memorial, reading the speeches on the walls. Retired reporters for papers long defunct. Speechwriters washed into town by the Republican tide of 1952 and left stranded. Consolidated-school-district lobbyists. Senior officials from the Bureau of Land Management. Consular officers brought back from overseas to end their careers in an unfamiliar and unfriendly city.

Every one of them was someone, once—a name to do at least a little conjuring with, a source for reporters needing background information on the way that people are thinking, over at Justice, or the direction the powers-that-be are leaning, over at State. In 1972, they were junior members of a disarmament delegation. In 1961, Orville Freeman picked them to investigate new irrigation techniques. In 1948, Thomas Dewey named them to his high-flying advance team. Third assistant undersecretaries whose lives were full with the crisis in the Belgian Congo, the border squabbles in Macedonia, the succession in Siam.

On the edge of Georgetown, in one of the playgrounds carved out of Rock Creek Park, my neighbor sits most October afternoons and spreads breadcrumbs for the birds. Perched on a bench among the leaves, he shoos away the pigeons so the nervous sparrows and chickadees get their share. Old men dress in layers, cotton shirts beneath wool sweaters beneath tweed jackets, and his collar is frayed, not from poverty but because shopping is exhausting for a man his age, and why should he buy new clothes now?

Beneath the young translucence old faces sometimes gain, you can see the bones of the ecstatic college boy who spent his good war with Wild Bill Donovan and the OSS, the seersucker-suited thirty-year-old at the State Department, the middle-aged chargé d'affaires. I spot him sometimes on Sundays standing on the portico outside Holy Trinity, leaning his white head toward the other white heads, smiling with the other old men at some reminiscence of times only they now remember.

Back in the days before she hardened herself out of poetry and into ideology, Adrienne Rich wrote a poem called "The Diamond Cutters." For a while in my twenties, I kept a pair of lines from the poem stuck with a magnet to the fridge—advice for those, like diamond cutters, who have important work to perform on objects that when they are finished must leave their hands: *Love only what you do / And not what you have done.*

But what else have the old to do besides remember what they've done? In other cities, they have extended families and settled places. In Washington, they have memories of when they were young and great things seemed to want only to be accomplished.

Robert Lowell once composed a brutal poem exposing the weakness of his naval-officer father. And the most brutal lines come at the end, when the poet taunts: *And once / nineteen, the youngest ensign in his class, / he was "the old man" of a gunboat on the Yangtze.* But Lowell also marks the truth that there is often in old men—especially those who brushed on history—the memory of a moment when promise seemed most likely to be fulfilled, a time when the work at hand was all and the man was nothing. And if you listen long enough, sitting with them on a bench to feed the birds, they will inevitably come to it.

Perhaps it was always this way in great capitals. Paris, London, St. Petersburg drew the bright young men in from the provinces and used them up as postal inspectors and superintendents of highway funds and analysts of foreign wars, as reporters and aides-de-camp and secretaries to the Board of Trade, as parliamentary assistants and fiscal administrators and military-procurement officers. But the drama seems smaller here, somehow; family and social life thinner in Washington—the only great political capital not also its nation's cultural or economic center.

Last month, the tiny wooden house around the corner was bought by a married couple, a pair of environmental lawyers. They're charming, ambitious, and terribly young. They plan to stay in town for only a few years, the husband told me as he proudly swept the brick sidewalk beside his first-purchased house. But meanwhile, they've taken so quickly to their jobs, and these are such exciting times to work in their field, it would be foolish to pass up the opportunity to get something done. Foolish. Washington belongs to them.

J. Bottum

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the weekly Standard

STARR WITNESS

God knows, there will be any number of ancillary proceedings in the looming House Judiciary Committee impeachment inquiry. Indeed, a rump group of Judiciary Democrats unofficially convened the first such proceeding last week: a "hearing" to address cosmic questions about the Constitution's Article II, Section 4. All the usual suspects were invited to "testify." *The chair now recognizes . . . Professor Laurence Tribe*. It was the studied judgment of this panel of Democrats—whaddya know?—that with respect to Monica Lewinsky, Bill Clinton stands accused of not a single crime or misdeed that merits even *consideration* of his removal from office.

More such nonsense inevitably awaits us. Because almost everything the Judiciary Committee might now conceivably busy itself with—short of a final vote on counts of impeachment—is nonsense. The entire country already has in hand thousands of pages of grand-jury evidence, much of it sworn testimony, derived from hundreds of subpoenas and interviews involving dozens of witnesses. Would it significantly advance public understanding, or substantively inform congressional deliberations, if those witnesses were made to recapitulate the available record while the cameras whirred? No, it would not.

And should the president not be accorded an opportunity, as his defenders sometimes demand, to present "exculpatory" evidence to the committee—evidence that the "biased" and "partisan" prosecutor neglected to develop or deliberately suppressed? As a theoretical matter, sure, we suppose he should. Except that Clinton has never once in nine months been denied such a chance. And he has never once taken it, either—because, at least where the most serious charges against him are concerned, no "exculpatory" evidence does or can exist.

WHY DO DEMOCRATS WANT TO QUESTION THE INDEPENDENT COUNSEL? ONLY TO LAY OUT THE ANTI-STARR CONSPIRACY THEORY OF WHITE HOUSE AGIT-PROP.

The president's perjuries are there, in incontrovertible black-and-white transcripts, for all to see. Robert Bennett himself, Clinton's lead attorney in the Paula Jones litigation, no longer contests the fact that Monica Lewinsky's affidavit denying a sexual relationship with the president was false. Which means that when Clinton—under oath before Judge Susan Webber Wright on January 17, 1998—affirmed that affidavit as "absolutely" true, he was lying. No ifs, ands, buts, or exculpations about it.

What meaningful, not-yet-forthcoming testimony remains to be secured by the Judiciary Committee, then? There is only one possible answer. The committee might still call the "biased" and "partisan" prosecutor, Kenneth W. Starr, as a witness.

In any other context, this would not, could not, and should not happen. Line prosecutors, working under the supervision of the attorney general, are properly immune from congressional questioning about their day-to-day casework. By established tradition—and under constitutional separation-of-powers doctrine—discretionary criminal-justice enforcement is entirely and exclusively the province of the executive branch. And Kenneth Starr is an executive-branch employee.

But here as elsewhere, the law that authorizes Starr's work stretches separation-of-powers doctrine to the limit. The independent-counsel statute explicitly subjects Starr to congressional oversight and obliges him to cooperate with congressional inquiries. And more than just statutory requirements are implicated. As a practical political matter—Starr is, after all, a central figure in the pending impeachment of a president—any refusal to allow his testimony becomes untenable. If Judiciary Committee Democrats insist that he appear, as they no doubt will, then chairman

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Henry Hyde will have little choice but to concur. And once Hyde joins this call, Starr will have little choice but to heed it.

Ken Starr is an intelligent and capable man. He knows what he has done with the Lewinsky investigation—and why—better than anyone else on Earth. When he presents himself to the Judiciary Committee, we assume he will acquit himself as convincingly as possible. But still, we fear, little good can come from Starr's imminent big moment in the spotlight.

Think of it: Why will Democrats want to call Starr in the first place? Only to lay out the anti-Starr conspiracy theory White House agit-propsters have been weaving all year long, the theory Clinton's congressional defenders have lately adopted as their overarching argument-for-all-seasons. It runs like this:

Linda Tripp conspired to get Monica Lewinsky involved in what might look to be a job-for-silence swap with the president. Tripp then, on January 12 of this year, delivered evidence of the purported obstruction of justice to the independent counsel. Starr then, on January 13, arranged to capture Lewinsky on tape appearing to confirm the obstruction. Which tape Starr used two days later, on January 15, to hoodwink Janet Reno into endorsing his jurisdiction over the Lewinsky affair. On January 16, that jurisdiction granted by the circuit court, Starr "dispatched" Tripp to debrief the Paula Jones attorneys. And the very next day, during his Jones deposition, Bill Clinton told lies in response to surprisingly detailed questions about Lewinsky, questions the president would never have been asked but for Ken Starr's sinister machinations.

THE PERJURY-TRAP PLOT LINE IS REPLETE WITH GAPING HOLES OF FACT AND LOGIC. IT'S NOT EVEN CLEAR STARR *WANTED* JURISDICTION OVER LEWINSKY MATTERS.

Thus the phrase "perjury trap" has entered the national vocabulary. But even on its own terms, the perjury-trap plot line is replete with gaping holes of fact and logic. It is not at all clear from the public record, for one thing, that Starr actually *wanted* jurisdiction over the president's Lewinsky escapade. It is only clear that Janet Reno's aides, dumbstruck by Linda Tripp's "body wire" tape, quickly concluded that an independent-counsel investigation was unavoidable—and settled on Starr as the best-situated candidate. Nor is it true that Clinton was caught unawares on January 17 by the Jones attorneys' Lewinsky queries. Clinton had known since early December that they were interested in the intern. He had known since late December that Lewinsky was more than a passing rumor to them. And the president had spent a good part of the preceding six weeks planning how to lie about having sex with her. Some "trap."

The ignorant credulity with which "new questions" have recently been published and broadcast about the origins of the independent counsel's Lewinsky investigation is an embarrassment to American journalism. All the more so since the anti-Starr conspiracy theory—*even if perfectly true*—would be altogether irrelevant to Bill Clinton's fitness for office.

In this respect. On October 1, 1997, before they had ever heard the name "Monica Lewinsky," Paula Jones's lawyers submitted a set of written "interrogatories" to the president in which he was asked to identify virtually every woman with whom he had engaged, or had sought to engage, in extramarital sexual relations. On December 11, 1997, Judge Wright narrowed the scope of this inquiry to state employees while Clinton was governor and federal employees while he was president—and then ordered him to respond. On December 23, 1997—weeks before even Starr's severest critics contend that the independent counsel had the slightest inkling about Monica Lewinsky—Clinton did respond. How many relevant women were there? "None," the president formally attested. In other words, had Clinton never been deposed on January 17, 1998, and *had Kenneth Starr never been born*, the president of the United States would still be guilty of perjury.

To be sure, without Starr's Lewinsky investigation, this and subsequent presidential perjuries would never have been revealed. Would it have been okay for the country to remain in the dark this way? *Yes*, the president's Democratic allies in and out of the Judiciary Committee now essentially suggest. *Yes*, because Kenneth Starr is a bad man and his investigation is "questionable," what he has proved must be forgotten, and Congress must decline to do anything about it. *Yes*, there are certain circumstances in which American citizens have no legitimate right or reason to know that their president is criminally dishonest.

An astonishingly ugly, fundamentally undemocratic idea. We're not quite sure what Henry Hyde can do to prevent his committee's Democratic minority, while it's beating up on Kenneth Starr in open hearings, from advancing this noxious notion—and thus transforming a necessary impeachment process into an obscurantist sideshow. We are quite sure, however, that if and when that happens, Judiciary Republicans will be honor-bound to stand up, sternly and unambiguously, for both Starr and the rule of law.

—David Tell, for the Editors

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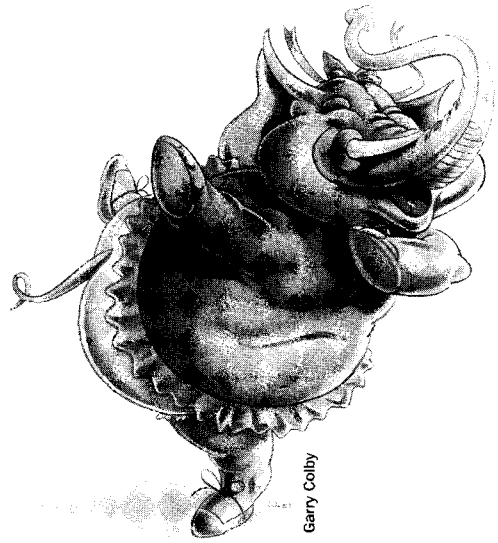
CHEER UP!

by William Kristol

FRIENDS, REPUBLICANS, COUNTRYMEN: Cheer up! (Especially Republicans.) The GOP will do well on November 3, capping the best three elections cycles for a political party since the Democrats in the 1930s. The Republican congressional leadership did a reasonable job of dampening potential Democratic turnout by cutting a not-too-awful budget deal with the president, who, incidentally, is likely to be impeached shortly after the election. And whether impeached or not, Clinton will be around for at least a while to ensure continued Democratic demoralization, and to make Americans receptive to bold Republican leadership in 2000. Not bad for a party that, in many ways, is still not ready to be a serious national governing party.


Garry Colby

Contrary to Democratic spin, media bias, and liberal wishful thinking, the Republicans do look strong for November 3. In the past week, most polls have shown Republicans ahead among likely voters in the generic congressional ballot. And Republicans always do better on Election Day than mid-October polls suggest: They outspend the Democrats in the last two weeks, and their voters turn out in greater numbers than pre-election surveys usually foresee.

There was a front-page *Washington Post* story last week that particularly depressed Republicans (who are all too easily depressed by unfavorable *Post* stories). It was a report on the *Post*'s own poll that highlighted an alleged 9-point Democratic lead. As it happened, the lead among *likely* voters was only 4 points—and even that contrasts with *Newsweek* and *New York Times* polls showing Republican leads among likely voters of 4 to 8 points. Note, too, that the *Post* in October 1996 had Democrats with an even larger lead over Republicans among registered voters—and the GOP nevertheless held both chambers of Congress.

What's more, the dynamics this year are more favorable to Republicans than in 1996. We have a GOP Congress that has produced a tax cut and a budget surplus rather than a government shutdown; a president on the verge of impeachment rather than on the verge of reelection; an appeals-court hearing this week on Paula Jones's sexual-harassment case against Clinton—and most telling of all, total hysteria among liberal columnists about the impending victory of Kenneth Starr and everything he represents: "sexual McCarthyism," the Salem witch trials, the rise of the "Taliban wing" of the GOP, and other frightening phenomena. It is a reliable rule of American politics: Hysteria on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* is a harbinger of good news for Republicans, glad tidings for conservatives.

The GOP strategy for the remaining two weeks of the election campaign is pretty obvious: a soft, positive, moderately conservative message that reassures swing voters. Republicans don't have to raise the issue of Clinton and his coming impeachment. It's already on voters' minds. Republicans can count on an undercurrent of disgust at Clinton and the party that props him up to drive GOP voters to the polls. In any case, a fresh poll by John Zogby indicates that people blame Clinton over Starr for the scandal by better than 2 to 1—and don't blame Republicans at all. And to win over less partisan, less anti-Clinton types—who may be wary of impeachment—Republicans can tout the reasonably good times that four years of a GOP Congress has brought.

There are, it's true, big splits in the Republican party. After the new Congress finishes doing some easy, but not unimportant, things—like overriding a presidential veto on partial-birth abortion, passing a modest middle-class tax cut, and continuing to strengthen defense—those splits will lead to a fierce debate among presidential contenders for 2000.

But for now, Republicans have a simple task: get along with one another for two weeks, appear cheerful and unthreatening, and wind up after November 3 in the best position they've had in 70 years. Then they can concentrate on their *real* mission—to drive *New York Times* contributors and other liberal muckety-mucks nuts.

William Kristol is editor and publisher of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Sweet Day for Sauerbrey?

by Fred Barnes

Bowie, Maryland

One of my rules of thumb in politics is pretty simple: Show me a Republican who lost in 1994, and I'll show you a loser. There was such a strong GOP tide in 1994 that I concluded any Republican who lost must be a turkey or a poor soul trapped in a Democratic stronghold. The only obvious exception was Jeb Bush, who was defeated in the Florida governor's race four years ago but is a shoo-in this year (partly because Democratic incumbent Lawton Chiles can't run again). Absent Bush, the rule seemed ironclad. But maybe not. In Maryland, Ellen Sauerbrey, a narrow loser in 1994 to Democratic governor Parris Glendening, is challenging him one more time. She has a tougher hill to climb than Bush because Maryland is more Democratic and liberal than Florida. Yet she now stands at least a 50-50 chance of ousting Glendening, the most egregious liberal hack among the nation's governors.

Ellen Sauerbrey

AP/Wide World Photos

Running in Maryland as a conservative (Sauerbrey calls herself "a Jack Kemp supply-sider") is normally a sure route to defeat. The last Republican to win the governorship was Spiro Agnew in 1966, and he swung to the left of Democrat George P. Mahoney. A racial conservative, Mahoney split the Democratic party by noisily opposing a fair-housing law and adopting the slogan "A man's home is his castle." Since then, the worst Republican candidates got slightly less than 40 percent of the vote, the best slightly more. That is, until Sauerbrey, a 60-year-old former schoolteacher and state legislator, got 50 percent in 1994, losing by fewer than 6,000 votes. She had one issue, cutting taxes, and she stuck with it despite advice from the queasy moderates who run the Maryland GOP to drop the issue.

What's improved Sauerbrey's chances in the last four years? She's far better known now, and people tend to like her. Glendening, 56, is also better known, but that hasn't helped him. He's untrustworthy, a flip-flopper, and socially awkward: Clinton without the charm. Sauerbrey, the daughter of a steelworker, also has money this time. She's raised more than $5 million, five times what she spent in 1994. Glendening will outspend her, but not by much. And Sauerbrey has a record to run against—Glendening's. He's the least popular Maryland governor in decades, and for good reason. On his watch, the sense that Maryland is eating Virginia's dust economically has intensified. Three times as many Marylanders commute to jobs in Virginia as the other way around. "Virginia is cleaning our clock," Sauerbrey told the Maryland Chamber of Commerce.

Sauerbrey still has the tax issue. Maryland has the second-highest state and local taxes on individuals in the nation. Thus, her proposal in 1994 for a 24 percent cut in state taxes was enormously popular. It also had legs: Glendening and Democratic legislators, prompted by Sauerbrey's campaign, passed a 10 percent tax cut. Now it's time to cut the other 14 percent, Sauerbrey argues, starting with a deep reduction in taxes for senior citizens and a cut in the levy on real-estate settlements. Glendening's response? Maryland can't afford it. "That is a huge blunder on their part," says Stuart Stevens, Sauerbrey's media consultant. Meanwhile, Glendening wants a grandiose, $15 billion expansion of the Washington area's Metro rapid-rail system that Sauerbrey contends will necessitate a hefty hike in the gas tax.

Another blunder by Glendening has allowed Sauerbrey to claim the education issue. He devoted $220 million to building a new football stadium in Baltimore for the NFL Ravens, whom he'd lured from Cleveland, and another $75 million for roads leading to a new stadium in Prince George's County for the Washington Redskins. Sauerbrey insists he funded the stadiums at the expense of education, and the charge has caught on, especially in the upscale Washington suburb of Montgomery County. That's the county liberals and Democrats gravitate to when they move to Washington; conservatives and Republicans usually land in the Virginia suburbs. Anyway, her TV ads call Glendening "a governor who builds stadiums instead of classrooms" and tout her plan to pay for 1,000 more teachers.

State delegate Michael Crumlin, elected as a Democrat but now an independent, echoed this charge

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when he endorsed Sauerbrey last week. Glendening has "seen fit to put stadiums and sports franchises ahead of schools," declared Crumlin, a black West Point graduate and Harvard MBA. Sauerbrey is backed by other crossovers, including former lieutenant governor Melvin Steinberg and Jim Brady, Glendening's ex-economic-development chief. And she got a near-endorsement from Eileen Rehrmann, a county executive who challenged Glendening for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination this year. Rehrmann appeared with Sauerbrey in early October and lauded her.

All this has left Glendening in deep trouble. His first task is putting together the Democratic base, and he's still at it with the election only weeks away. He hired a new media consultant, Robert Shrum, for help. Shrum is a longtime adviser to senator Edward Kennedy, and Kennedy's niece, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, is Glendening's lieutenant governor. But the senator had nothing to do with Shrum's working for Glendening, Shrum says. Glendening enlisted the White House to pressure Maryland's two most influential black politicians, mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore and Prince Georges County executive Wayne Curry, to endorse him. They did so without enthusiasm and without informing Glendening. And in a humiliating flip-flop, Glendening invited President Clinton to campaign for him after snubbing Clinton in Maryland weeks earlier. At that time, the governor explained that appearing with the president would send a bad signal to his 18-year-old son.

Selling Glendening to voters isn't easy. So in the final weeks, his campaign has tried a different tack, demonizing Sauerbrey as a flaming right-winger. "She clearly wants to have no discussion of her real views on gun control, the environment, choice," says Shrum. "She wants to run on one issue, a tax cut." (By "choice," Shrum means abortion, not school choice.) The goal is to make her radioactive to moderates and liberals in Montgomery County, even if they don't relish voting for Glendening. "My sense is we'll hold what we got in '94," Sauerbrey says. All she needs is a pickup of 3 or 4 percent in Montgomery to win. In 1994, she didn't have the money to respond on TV to attacks. Now she says, "It's very reassuring when you have the ability to shoot back." It may also make the difference between winning and losing.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

FOX HUNTING IN PHILLY

by Tucker Carlson

Center Square, Pennsylvania

JOE HOEFFEL ADMITS he was "concerned" when the Monica Lewinsky mess first erupted in January. As a Democrat running for Congress in a historically Republican district north of Philadelphia, Hoeffel feared the president's troubles might affect his own chances of being elected. Not anymore. In the past month, Hoeffel says, the scandal has ricocheted. Now, it is his opponent, incumbent Republican Jon Fox, who is being damaged by the Lewinsky affair. "The Republicans really overplayed their hand," Hoeffel says confidently. "There's a big backlash."

If Hoeffel's theory sounds familiar, it may be because it's on the lips of virtually every Democratic candidate and consultant in the country. According to the Backlash Scenario, voters, many of whom stopped paying attention to politics after the Lewinsky scandal, have been outraged by the reckless partisanship of Republicans on Capitol Hill, and particularly by the unfair release of Clinton's videotaped deposition. These newly energized voters—reliable Democrats and Republican crossovers alike—will use the November elections to send a message, not to the president, but to a Congress Gone Mad.

That's the theory, anyway, and there's no better place to test it than Montgomery County, Pa., where Jon Fox and Joe Hoeffel are nearing the end of perhaps the closest race in the country. By almost every measure, the two men are evenly matched. Approximately the same age, from the same town, and with similar professional backgrounds, the candidates have even run against each other for the same seat before. In 1996, Fox beat Hoeffel in a race so close it took nine days to call. When Fox was finally declared the winner, it was by a margin of only 84 votes. That was two years ago, and since then little has changed in Pennsylvania's Thirteenth. Except, of course, Monica Lewinsky.

From the beginning, Hoeffel, the Democrat, has seemed irritated and confused by the encroachment of the scandal on his campaign. "Does anyone care about my Internet views?" he asked petulantly this fall when questions about Lewinsky overwhelmed his attempts to talk about the Information Superhighway. Hoeffel tried to settle the matter by taking a firm position on the Starr report. (After "skimming" it, Hoeffel came to

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the unsurprising conclusion that Clinton shouldn't be impeached.) When that didn't work, Hoeffel simply recited Democratic talking points ("Starr spent four years and $40 million investigating and came up with nothing but Monica Lewinsky," etc.).

Still, the Monica questions kept coming. At a press conference in September, a local reporter named Peggy Gibbons got right to the point. Now that you've read the Starr report, Gibbons asked, what do you find most despicable about President Clinton's behavior? "Is it the fact he [received a sex act] from his intern? Or is it the fact he [received it] in the Oval Office?" The usually articulate Hoeffel was unable to answer. "He can't get his message out," says a Fox aide who has watched Hoeffel's Lewinsky-caused contortions with deep and growing pleasure.

A LOCAL REPORTER GOT RIGHT TO THE POINT. NOW THAT YOU'VE READ THE STARR REPORT, SHE ASKED, WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST DESPICABLE ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S BEHAVIOR?

Not that Hoeffel's message is much different from Fox's. In the absence of compelling local controversies—whether to continue a certain kind of crop subsidy, whether to build a new overpass—the race has taken on a certain predictability, with each candidate reading from roughly the same list of this season's market-tested issues supplied by his national party: saving Social Security, reforming HMOs, and, of course, "education." In other words, says Jeff Stein, Hoeffel's campaign manager, "the same issues as anywhere else. The fax machines work well."

Even without their faxes from Washington, Hoeffel and Fox would probably sound alike, since they seem to believe pretty much the same things. Both are solidly pro-choice, pro-Israel, environmentally aware, and attentive to the concerns of senior citizens. Both are deeply troubled by teen smoking. Both consider Social Security sacrosanct. Both in fact are uncomfortable talking about Monica Lewinsky. (Fox says he isn't sure whether Clinton should resign.) It's hard to run in contrast to an opponent you resemble, and Hoeffel has been reduced to attacking Fox on technical violations. In September, Hoeffel issued a press release slamming the incumbent for failing to "reinstate the venipuncture benefit to Medicare." By October, he was denouncing Fox, a longtime supporter of Planned Parenthood, as a "right-wing extremist" for his opposition to Clinton's partial-birth-abortion veto.

Voters tend to be forgiving of such minor deviations, though Fox's reputation as a legislative lightweight with no core beliefs probably still hurts him. "Fox flip-flops on every issue," complained *Philadelphia* magazine earlier this year. "Catch him at a pro-life potluck, and he's Mr. Sanctity of Human Life; see him trolling for the women's vote (which is substantial in his district), and he'll be calling you 'sister' and talking about a 'woman's right to choose.'" Fox's desire not to offend ("pandering to voters," as Hoeffel puts it) often results in almost comically bland legislation. The high point of Fox's two terms on the Hill, in fact, may be the "Princess Diana Humanitarian Leadership Resolution" he sponsored, which expressed "the condolences of the House of Representatives on the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales," as well as thanks for her "grace and good humor."

Fox will never be a statesman. On the other hand, he pays attention to his district. A legendary provider of constituent services, Fox works 20-hour days, signs all his mail himself, returns frequently to his district, and makes certain to call voters on their 100th birthdays. Earlier this year, he arranged for one of his constituents to receive a bone-marrow transplant.

Mediocre though Fox may be, it's never easy to beat an incumbent, particularly one who comes through with the occasional cancer cure. Are voters mad enough at Congress to throw Fox out? If so, they're being quiet about it. One afternoon last week, Hoeffel and an aide stood outside a supermarket in the town of Center Square to greet voters and pass out campaign literature. It was around lunch time, and the vast majority of shoppers who walked by were relatively affluent suburban women, the group supposedly most incensed by the partisan conduct of the Republican Congress.

Of the perhaps 100 people Hoeffel greeted, only one, a 60ish woman pushing a shopping cart full of what appeared to be cat food, said a word about Monica Lewinsky. "They should string that little girl up," the woman growled. "I think she's a slut." The woman later admitted that she had never planned to vote for Jon Fox anyway.

Where's the backlash? Where are the polls that show a wave of voters planning to vote against—not just grouse about—the Republican inquisition? "Huh?" replies Hoeffel, incredulous that anyone would ask such a stupid question. "I haven't seen polls. That's what I *hear*. Don't you ever get out of Washington?"

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Orrin Hatches an Egg

by Matthew Rees

THE TEETH-GNASHING on Capitol Hill these days isn't coming from Democrats upset with Bill Clinton, but from Republicans exasperated with Orrin Hatch. The Utah senator has logged some quality time on national television over the past three months—he's done 22 shows, by my count—but many Republicans believe his appearances have thrown a life preserver to Clinton and provided Democrats with cover to vote against conviction in a Senate trial. The frustration among GOP senators became so great in September that when they met for one of their normally staid weekly lunches, almost a dozen members went after Hatch. One veteran senator says, "I can't remember any other occasion when there was such extensive and heartfelt criticism of another senator."

Just about everywhere but the Republican cloakroom, Hatch is thought to be, as *Washington Post* columnist Mary McGrory put it, "a stiff-necked Mormon elder with . . . a permanently pursed mouth for lecturing people." But this image is at least a decade out of date. In fact, Hatch's GOP critics have a laundry list of complaints: As Judiciary Committee chairman, Hatch has been too quick to confirm liberal judges; he's adopted a slew of Democratic causes (a federal hate-crimes law, billions for children's health insurance); and, most damning, he's developed a close working relationship—even a friendship!—with Ted Kennedy. Republican distrust of Hatch is so great that GOP staffers treat his apostasy with the joke, "Don't count your Hatches until they chicken."

Kent Lemon

Orrin Hatch

Given what's at stake now, Republicans aren't in a joking mood about Hatch. True, he's been a vocal defender of Ken Starr, he's blasted the president's conduct, and he's held out the prospect of impeachment. Yet all of this is negated by the perception that he's gone soft on Clinton, that he's been trying to establish a weighty role for himself in the event of a Senate trial, and that he's using his Lewinsky visibility as part of a strategy for a presidential run. "Orrin is viewed with great skepticism in the Republican conference these days," confirms one GOP senator.

The first real sign of trouble came in July, when Hatch appeared on *Meet the Press* and equivocated on the question of whether the Secret Service should be required to testify before the federal grand jury. Hatch conceded that the White House argument against testimony had some merit and promised to introduce legislation next year to resolve the issue. Republicans knew something was amiss when House liberal Barney Frank, appearing on the program, replied, "I think Orrin has stated it exactly right."

Hatch made two more appearances on *Meet the Press* before Clinton's August 17 grand-jury testimony, both times suggesting that if the president came clean about his relationship with Monica, he probably wouldn't be removed from office. This was not an official Republican talking point. Hatch redeemed himself in GOP eyes, though, when he hit six national news programs the night the president testified and derided Clinton's continued weaseling. (In a muttered, off-air comment, he characterized Clinton as a "jerk," which further helped him with his fellow Republicans.)

Yet GOP goodwill toward Hatch didn't last long. One senator told me that a longstanding problem for Hatch is "he's too easily flattered." The senator was thinking of a stunt Clinton pulled with Hatch on the morning of September 13. Hatch was driving to CBS's Washington studio to appear on *Face the Nation* when Clinton called him. They ended up talking for over 20 minutes—Hatch was on a car phone—and Republicans later suspected the president hoodwinked Hatch with this timely chat.

During the *Face the Nation* interview, Hatch took some obligatory swipes at Clinton and his legal team, but also praised the president's apology at a prayer breakfast a few days earlier and predicted Clinton would survive if he dropped the legalisms and started "being what he is: a basically warm, winning person whom the American people have liked from the beginning." One Republican senator was so enraged, he wanted to play a videotape of the program for all GOP senators. Only a late intervention by majority leader Trent Lott blocked this.

In an interview last week, Hatch passionately

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defended his rhetoric about the president. "Every statement I've made has helped make us look like we're not trying to screw the guy. I've actually put Clinton in a bind by being moderate in tone." As for Republicans who doubt the gentler approach, Hatch wishes they would think more about the consequences of what they say: "I don't think it's good for Republicans to blast away at the president knowing they don't have Democratic votes to impeach. That makes us look like idiots." And noting he's been a consistent, outspoken defender of the independent counsel, he asks of his GOP critics, "Where were they when Ken Starr was being smeared?"

The most serious complaint lodged against Hatch is that he's pre-empting the formal impeachment process. Hatch's oft-stated belief that there are not yet 67 votes for conviction—uttered most recently on the October 11 *Meet the Press*—strikes many as premature. It also leads them to believe that Hatch is itching to be the broker for some form of punishment that doesn't lead to Clinton's ouster. (Hatch's Senate Judiciary Committee would have no role in a trial, unlike the House Judiciary Committee in the impeachment process.)

Republicans may choose to designate someone to coordinate their efforts in a Senate trial, but one highly respected GOP senator says that even if this happens, "Hatch won't be the one selected." Indeed, on October 1, a group of conservative senators upset with Hatch's pronouncements sent a private letter to Lott urging him to prevent any Senate action on a censure motion until the House had acted, and questioning whether any such motion would be constitutional.

Hatch's allies say some of the GOP animus stems from envy at the senator's extensive media exposure. But another factor may be Hatch's flirtation with a presidential campaign in 2000. Appearing to go soft on Bill Clinton may seem an odd way for a conservative to lay the groundwork for such a run, but friends and colleagues say Hatch is giving the race serious consideration. At this point, Hatch is doing no more than thinking about it, but one Hatch-nik says the senator's calm posture over the past few months will help him be perceived as a thoughtful, articulate voice in a chaotic environment.

Asked about his presidential ambitions, Hatch chuckles and says he doesn't take them too seriously: "I've had people come to me about running for president, but they've been doing that ever since I got to the Senate."

With senators not having to act on Clinton for at least a few months, Hatch will have an opportunity to give his presidential prospects a bit more attention. But he's not going to pipe down about the impeachment process, saying, "If we are perceived as unfair, it is going to kill our party." By the same token, if Hatch continues to irk his Republican colleagues, leaving the Senate to run for president could begin to look more attractive every day.

Matthew Rees is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

FAITH DEFENDS REASON

by Richard John Neuhaus

TWENTY YEARS AGO, Karol Wojtyla was elected John Paul II. "Be not afraid!" he declared in his first homily as pope, addressing himself not only to Christians but to the whole of humanity. That he was a Pole, that he was young (for a pope), that he was an athlete and photogenic and a master of the media—all these things were much remarked at the time. Less appreciated, then and now, is that John Paul is a philosopher. It is that dimension of this remarkable figure that is brought to the fore in a new encyclical issued on October 15, the twentieth anniversary of his pontificate.

The document, *Fides et Ratio* (Faith and Reason), powerfully argues a simple proposition: Be not afraid of human reason. Here, at the end of the twentieth century, on the threshold of the third millennium, after the depredations of Enlightenment rationalism and reactions to it, comes a ringing defense of the capacity of the human mind to seek and know what John Paul dares to call the truth. Voltaire would be astonished, Hume confounded, Kant curious, and Quine incredulous that, after all their labors, the world's most influential champion of human reason should turn out to be none other than the bishop of Rome.

Even within the Catholic Church, *Fides et Ratio* is notable as the first major teaching document devoted to faith and reason in more than a hundred years. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) affirmed that human reason can know the existence of God, and Leo XIII in 1879 (*Aeterni Patris*) proposed St. Thomas Aquinas as the model for synthesizing philosophy and theology. The new encyclical is more comprehensive and auda-

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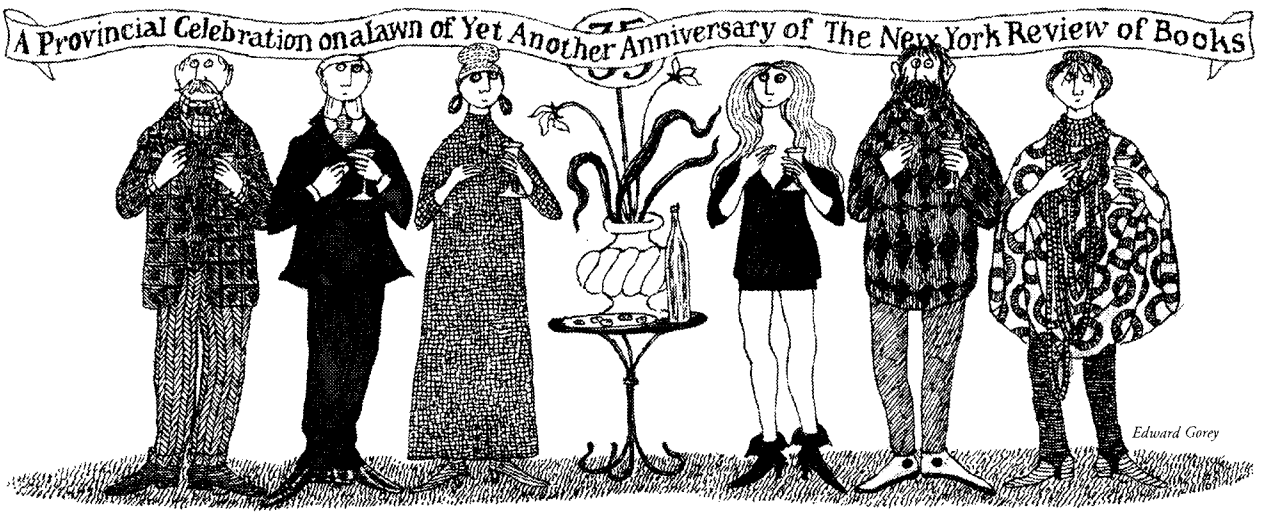

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cious than those earlier statements. Some might think it impossibly ambitious in its reach.

In a close-knit argument of more than 25,000 words, John Paul contends that modern philosophers have lost their nerve. Philosophy should resume its dignity and duty in asking the really big questions about the meaning of good and evil, life and death, and why there is anything rather than nothing. True philosophy is born in wonder and directed to transcendent truth. Philosophy needs such a recovery, and so does religion. One of the contributions of ancient Greek philosophy was to use reason to cleanse religion of superstition and mythology. Religion today, including Christianity, still needs that contribution of philosophy. But the philosophy that is needed, says the pope, cannot be closed to "the horizon of the absolute" that is provided by divine revelation.

Kevin Chadwick

One theme of *Fides et Ratio* is a defense of human reason, its orientation to truth and its capacity to know the truth. The Church, John Paul insists, must be the defender and servant of human reason because the Church bears the message that the Word—the ultimate reason or logos of all reality—became human in Jesus Christ. The intimate and necessary friendship between philosophy and theology flourished for centuries, the pope contends, until the rise of the university in the late Middle Ages, and later the Enlightenment, began to pit faith and reason against each other. We are still living with that unhappy legacy in which faith and reason, theology and philosophy, belief and knowledge, metaphysics and science, are viewed as separate worlds, with each having little or no use for the other. The fault for this tragic divorce between faith and reason, John Paul says, lies with both theologians and philosophers. Theology denigrated the capacity of reason, and philosophy denigrated the possibility of revelation, to the impoverishment of theology and philosophy alike.

The reconciliation of faith and reason is essential, says the pope, because there is finally only one truth, and there is finally only one truth because the source and end of simply everything is one, namely, the God of Israel, who Christians believe is incarnate in space and time. This revealed truth, the argument continues, provides the "horizon" and "stimulus" for human reason to venture boldly into the far reaches of reality, confident that its pursuit of truth is not in vain. The alternative is a shriveled and timorous philosophy that with "false modesty" denies its capacity to really know much about anything worth knowing. Such false modesty, ironically, paves the way for the hubris of instrumental reason and "scientism," which, in turn, invites the triumph of technology over truth and ends up in a nihilistic subjection of what is human to the caprice of fate and Nietzsche's "will to power."

If John Paul is critical of the missteps of theology and philosophy in past centuries, he is equally critical of current intellectual enthusiasms that denigrate human reason and the possibility of knowing the truth. Many religious thinkers welcome "postmodern" and "multiculturalist" theories because they presumably give religion "a place at the table," as one possible truth among other possible truths in a world where there finally is no truth. John Paul, however, believes that giving up on ultimate truth is too high a price to pay for a place at the postmodernist table. Enlightenment rationalism, so despised by today's postmodernists, at least believed that there was a truth that could be known for sure. The problem with that rationalism, *Fides et Ratio* argues, is that it was not rational enough. It unreasonably imprisoned reason within a too-constricted belief about what reason can know. The ancient Greeks and the great thinkers of the Christian intellectual tradition were right: Reason can know the good, the true, and the beautiful, even if it can never know completely or perfectly.

The encyclical also offers a strong critique of "fideism." Any suggestion that faith is not subject to rational analysis is a disservice to faith and to the universality of truth. John Paul cites St. Augustine: "Believing is nothing other than to think with assent. Believers are also thinkers: in believing they think and in thinking they believe. If faith does not think, it is nothing." Many say that we are on the edge of a worldwide resurgence of religious faith, and they may be right, but the pope says we should not welcome that prospect if it is not one of faith and reason working hand in hand to restore the dignity of human persons in their capacity to know the truth.

Fides et Ratio is an audacious intellectual proposal. Among philosophers, theologians, scientists, thinking believers and nonbelievers alike, it should provoke reflection and argument for many years to come.

***Father Richard John Neuhaus, a priest of the archdiocese of New York, is editor in chief of* First Things.**

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What's On The Minds of America's Leading Conservatives?

Popular conservative authors pictured (*left to right*) Pat Buchanan, Ann Coulter, G. Gordon Liddy, Robert H. Bork, Dinesh D'Sousa, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., and Thomas Sowell.

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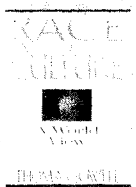

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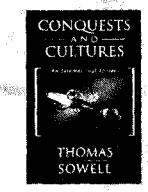

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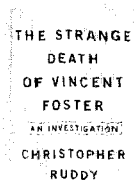

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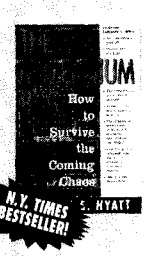

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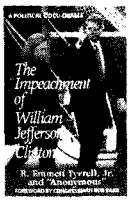

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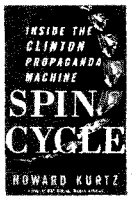

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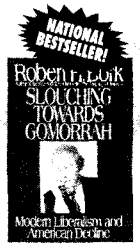

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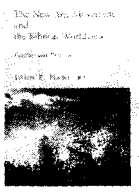

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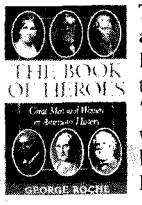

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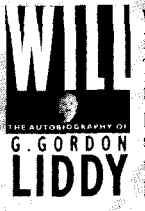

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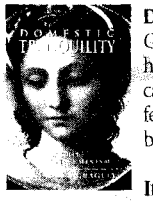

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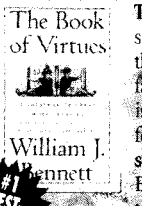

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Cell Phone Naturalists

By David Brooks

I must have been crazy to think I could climb to the top of the REI outdoors-gear store in Seattle without a professional guide and months of training. I'm only a few steps inside the front door, in the ice-ax section, and already I'm feeling oxygen-deprived. Before me stretch more than 80,000 square feet of snow shoes, kayaks, tents, crampons, and parkas, a daunting profusion of equipment options. I've lost feeling in the fingers I use to sign credit-card chits. I'm getting tunnel vision. My goal of reaching the coffee shop upstairs at the store's summit suddenly seems an absurdity. Flummoxed by this bewildering environment, I only know that somehow I must summon the strength to trudge on. If I am ever to penetrate the essence of contemporary culture, I must conquer the north face of REI.

Tony De Luz

To get this far, I drove my rented minivan to downtown Seattle and parked among the muddied-up sport-utes in the REI lot. I walked past the postage-stamp forest landscaped around the store as a place for customers to test-ride mountain bikes. I rode up in the slate-floored exterior elevator and stepped onto the front balcony with its huge benches. A plaque on each reassured me that the bench is made of wood from trees blown down in 1995; no tree was murdered in the making of this rest spot. Above me, clocks told the time atop Mount Everest and Eiger in the Swiss Alps.

Inside the front door (ice-axes serve as door handles), there's a museum of outdoors gear off to the right so you can enjoy a little edifying foreplay before you get down to serious shopping. At the far end of the museum is the climbing wall—at 65 feet, the largest free-standing climbing structure in the world.

Up to this point, I was feeling good, but now that I've reached the commercial area, the sheer vastness of the place knocks me back. It's not the salespeople who make my brain spin. I knew they'd be products of Seattle's culture of hiking-shorts macho. They bounce around the store flashing their enormous calves, looking like escapees from the Norwegian Olympic team. Nor is it my fellow customers who have put me in this state. I was ready for squads of super-fit software designers with glacier glasses hanging from Croakies around their necks (because you can never tell when a 600-foot mountain of ice might roll into town, sending off hazardous glare).

It's the technology I am unprepared for. I was expecting to enter a world of reverence for nature; I didn't realize I'd need a joint degree in chemistry and physics from MIT. Up beyond the ice-ax section, for example, there's a play table where customers try out a dozen different water filters and purifiers. As you traverse the spot, you're expected to distinguish between purifiers made from iodine resin and tri-iodine resin, glass fiber and pleated-glass fiber, a ceramic microstrainer and a structured-matrix microstrainer.

And it gets worse. Every item in the store comes with a mind-boggling number of chemically engineered options that only experienced wilderness geeks could possibly appreciate. And from each product dan-

David Brooks is a senior editor of The Weekly Standard.

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gles a thick booklet so packed with high-tech jargon that it makes selecting a mainframe computer seem as simple as picking an apple off a tree. For a backpack, do I want a Sun Tooth Tech pack with 500x1000 denier cordura or a Bitterroot Tech Pack with the 430 denier HexStop trim? For crampons, do I want the semi-rigid 12-point Charlet Moser S-12 Rapidfix Lanieres with the heel-clip in the rear or the Grivel Rambo with the rigid drop-forged points and the step-in bindings? Should my canoe be made from DuPont's patented material Kevlar or regular nylon? Even something as basic as sandals comes in various high-tech versions, loaded with expedition-class straps and interstellar treads.

I'm dimly aware of some code of gear connoisseurship to which I should be paying attention. For true nature techies, some things, like boots and sport-utility vehicles, should be as big as possible. Other things, like stoves and food packs, should be as small as possible. And other things, like tents and sleeping bags, should pack up small and open up big.

But the REI store's real *raison d'être* is upstairs on the mezzanine, in the clothing department. Because while only a few people actually go climb glaciers, there are millions and millions who want to dress as if they did. Just a few miles east of here at Microsoft's headquarters, for example, you'd get strange looks if you showed up for work in a suit, carrying a briefcase. But if you came dressed for Everest in a Gore-Tex parka and boots that keep you warm to -70 Fahrenheit, you'd blend right in.

So most of the foot traffic at REI seems to be on the mezzanine. I climb there looking for a respite from all the high-tech mumbo jumbo of the gear section and do indeed find a few soothing racks of all-cotton shirts in muted colors. But I don't go far before I am assaulted by a blaze of magenta and cobalt blue glaring off a vast profusion of polyester. It soon becomes obvious that while in the seventies the polyester people were low-class disco denizens, now they are high-status environmentalists. Between me and the coffee shop at the far end of the mezzanine there remains a treacherous field of artificial-fiber parkas, paddle jackets, zip pants, stretch vests, anoraks, and ponchos, each with its ominous booklet hanging down, stuffed with technical detail, highlighting the state-of-the-artness of the item. I confess, I feel myself losing the will to live. I am seized with the desire to sit down and just let somebody find my lifeless body here amidst the Gore-Tex mountain bibs.

But a voice—it sounds like James Earl Jones—urges me on, and soon I am slogging through racks and racks of Cordura, Polartec, and all the "ex" fabrics—Royalex, Spandex, Supplex, and Gore-Tex. There are $400 parkas with core-vent kinetic systems and sleeves with universal radial hinges (so you can move your arms). There are high-denier parka shells, power-stretch tights with microfilaments, expedition-weight leggings, fleece, microfleece, and BiPolar Fleece (for people on Prozac). My favorite is a Titanium Omnitech parka with double-rip stop nylon supplemented with ceramic particles and Polyurethane coat-welded seams. I stop. I imagine myself sporting this number, saying to myself, "Here I am in the middle of the forest and I'm wearing the Starship *Enterprise*."

Part of what makes the REI phenomenon so disorienting is the perverse way in which it revives the Dandy Ethic. In 19th-century Bath, Beau Brummell and his confreres paid obsessive attention to the quality and material of their clothing. Here in the Pacific Northwest, bastion of casualness, the same sort of attention is paid, only this time to rugged outerwear. My main problem, though, was that I brought to REI a set of false presuppositions. I thought that if you were the type who wanted to go out into nature, you would want to be natural. You'd be a woodsy sort of person who likes to get away from the pollution and artificiality of civilization and find spiritual cleansing in the wilderness. In short, you'd value nature, not high-tech wizardry. You'd aim for anti-commercial simplicity, not flashy consumer connoisseurship.

Throughout American history, after all, nature and technology have been cultural rivals. In 1964, the literary critic Leo Marx wrote a classic book called *The Machine in the Garden*. He opened it by describing a scene that took place on July 27, 1844. Nathaniel Hawthorne was sitting alone in the woods reflecting on the birds, bugs, and trees around him when the idyllic stillness was disturbed by the whistle of an onrushing train, gentle at a distance but increasingly malevolent the closer it came. "The long shriek," Hawthorne wrote, was

> harsh above all harshness. . . . It tells the story of busy men, citizens from the hot street . . . men of business; in short of all unquietness; and no wonder that it gives such a startling shriek, since it brings the noisy world into the midst of our slumbrous peace.

That train rumbling through the rural landscape became a popular motif in the painting and literature of 19th-century America. "Indeed," Marx writes, "it is difficult to think of a major American writer" who has

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not been fascinated by the dissonance between technology and nature. The theme figures in Thoreau, Whitman, Hemingway, Henry James, Sherwood Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Melville, Fitzgerald, Steinbeck, T.S. Eliot, Dos Passos, and many others.

The rivalry coincides with what Marx calls two conditions of consciousness. On the one hand is the party of technology, which was as enthusiastic about the locomotive in the mid-19th century as today's technophiles are about the computer. Marx quotes an 1840s journalist intoxicated by the power of steam:

> Steam is annihilating space. . . . Traveling is changed from an isolated pilgrimage to a kind of triumphal procession. . . . Caravans of voyagers are now winding as it were on the wings of the wind round the habitable globe. Here they glide over cultivated acres on rods of iron, and there they rise and fall on the bosom of the deep, leaving behind them foaming wheel-tracks like the chariot path of a sea god.

Not all were so grandiloquent, but the technologists shared other traits. They tended to be utilitarians and materialists. Rationalists, they believed in logic, statistics, calculations, and science. They tended to think that God had created nature for man's use and had granted man dominion over it. The howling wilderness was there to be mastered and made productive. Technology could make the rough smooth; it was the fountain of "improvements," to use a popular word of the period. For the party of the machine, technology meant progress, opportunity, wealth, and well-being.

The party of nature rebelled against this worldview. Its devotees were romantics. They prized sensation and intuitive understanding more than reason and logic. They tended to value contemplation more than action. They were transcendentalists more than materialists. "Things are in the saddle, / And ride mankind," complained Emerson. They sought simpler and more spontaneous ways of living.

Nature for them was no howling wilderness, but a remnant of the pristine paradise that was man's first home and the great cure for all the greed and shallowness of urban civilization. Concluded Emerson, "The Land is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture." Thoreau deepened his friend's argument. As the religious-studies professor Max Oelschlager points out, Thoreau didn't believe that people were redeemed through nature. He believed, before Darwin, that they belonged to nature. There should be no barrier between man and the woods. Civilization, which erects barriers, leads only to alienation. "Life consists with wildness," he wrote. "The most alive is the wildest."

The party of nature saw the path to happiness in throwing off unnecessary wealth and artifice in order to reconnect with the kindred patterns of nature. As Aldo Leopold wrote in his hugely influential 1949 *A Sand County Almanac*, America "has become so obsessed with economic health as to have lost the capacity to remain healthy."

The culture war between the party of technology and the party of nature soon turned into a political contest, whose outlines are familiar to this day. The technologists favor economic growth and development, the naturalists favor conservation and limits on growth. Especially in Washington, D.C., the battle lines are stark. The Republicans have become the party of the machine. They are the ones who propose legislation that would increase logging and mining on public land. They take the economic side of any debate, and call for cost-benefit analysis, and denounce the job-destroying effects of environmental laws. When Republicans see liberals going to environmentalist extremes, they say scathingly, "It's a religion to them," as if religiosity were synonymous with zealotry (an odd sentiment coming from conservatives).

The economic arguments are often compelling, especially considering the environmentalists' tendency to exaggerate problems and deny economic costs. But it is striking that even to express love of nature has become almost taboo in conservative circles. Decades ago, Russell Kirk and the southern agrarians celebrated the pastoral ideal. But that strain of conservatism is now confined to the paleoconservative faction and *Chronicles* magazine. Today an outsider could read through a mountain of conservative journalism and come away with the impression that conservatives have no interest in preserving nature. Conservatives can be seen picking apart the *dirigiste* dreams of the environmentalists, and they can be found poking holes in the apocalyptic predictions of the environmental movement. And when it comes time to talk about the things they love, conservatives wax romantic about technology, not wilderness.

Liberal Democrats occupy the opposite pole. They tend to disdain economic thinking as a mere camouflage for the exploitation of nature. The Sierra Club's magazine, for example, is riven with anti-corporate and anti-capitalist sentiment (though most of its overwhelmingly affluent subscribers presumably work for corporations). Environmentalists can be passionately, almost fanatically, anti-machine (hang around some when a snowmobile goes by). They often hiss the word "development." This prejudice leads environmental

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activists to adopt all sorts of absolutist approaches to environmental problems. Carcinogens can't just be reduced to innocuous levels, they have to be totally purged, no matter how much it costs to remove the last 0.1 percent. Forests can't be harvested in moderation, the policy must be zero cutting. National parks can't be managed for biodiversity, they have to be run according to the principle "Nature knows best." In short, nature must be cleansed of human interference. The forest must triumph over the machine.

Back at REI, however, the culture war between the party of the machine and the party of nature is obsolete. REI is the home of the Cell Phone Naturalists. These people are simultaneously pro-technology and pro-nature. Seattle is one of the most technologically advanced cities in America and also one of the most environmentally aware. No matter how conservative or libertarian the people in suburban Seattle may be on economic matters, they are environmentalists through and through. And the equipment at REI seems to have reconciled nature and economic development. Today, after all, the machine in the garden isn't the locomotive roaring through the valley. It is the cell phone in the forest. Information-age technology doesn't pose the same threat to nature. In the postindustrial age, technology and nature no longer seem such rivals. The Cell Phone Naturalists (a phrase I owe to NPR's Julia Redpath) are technologists, capitalists, and environmentalists all at once.

And if you observe them long enough, you begin to see that they have merged the mindsets that divided the industrial-era engineers from the Transcendentalists. These Cell Phone Naturalists are optimistic about material progress, as were the materialists of yore. But they tend not to see society as a giant mechanism run according to rational, comprehensible laws, as their techie predecessors did. They tend not to think mechanistically at all. Instead, they think organically, like romantics.

The difference between the thoreauvians and the Cell Phone Naturalists is as stark as the contrast between building a railroad and building a Web site. A railroad involves a far-flung network of iron tracks and runs like a great metal machine. The Internet is organic. It sprang up spontaneously. No headquarters controls it. It is infinitely complex and always changing, yet it works. It's more like a rain forest than a giant clock. And if you listen to Cell Phone Naturalists enough, you realize they see all life as an ecosystem. It is their dominant metaphor. They use pastoral terms and nature metaphors to describe man-made institutions, whether they are talking about their company, the marketplace, intellectual life, or their own neighborhood. An institution is deemed to be working well when it functions like a forest: when it is diverse, filled with autonomous creatures fulfilling their individual missions, when it lacks a single autocrat or clear hierarchy, when it allows each member to adapt continually to changing conditions and opportunities. Cell Phone Naturalists are comfortable with dynamic order, with systems that are always changing yet fundamentally stable. Sustainable.

So when the Cell Phone Naturalist drives out into the Cascade Mountains in his Land Rover to sit in the woods and fiddle with the Global Positioning System he bought with his Sierra Club credit card, of course he doesn't see any contradiction between his lavish consumer spending and his natural experience. The

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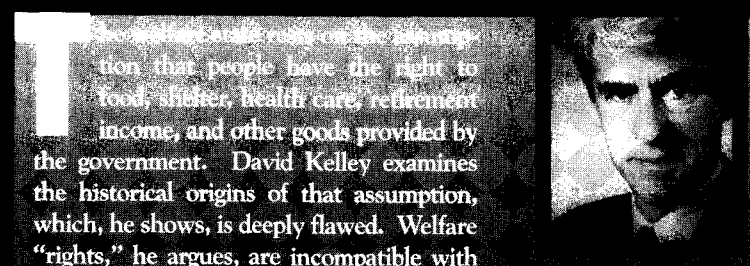
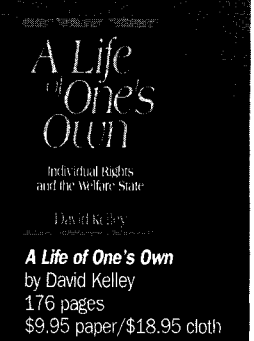


tion that people have the right to food, shelter, health care, retirement income, and other goods provided by the government. David Kelley examines the historical origins of that assumption, which, he shows, is deeply flawed. Welfare "rights," he argues, are incompatible with freedom, justice, and true benevolence, and they have damaged the genuine welfare of those who can least afford to become dependent on the government.



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old-fashioned naturalist-moralist may have sought the simple life. He may have wanted to retreat from civilization and all its corruptions to return to basic modes of existence. He may have been convinced that wealth poses a mortal danger to virtue and that self-denial is the only course to happiness. But that way of thinking is out of place in the pages of the lavishly funded environmental magazines (some of which carry Rolex ads on their back covers), on the lips of the techno-millionaires in their enviro-mansions, and amid the cornucopia of REI.

The Cell Phone Naturalists aren't looking to recreate the simple life of the Shakers or the Transcendentalists or the hippies. They're not waging war on the automobile or weaving their own clothes on hand looms. They're not trying to escape from society. They are society's winners. In short, they are not renouncing money for simplicity. They're using money to buy turbo-charged natural experiences.

Somebody once said the history of America is the history of a people turning Eden into Wealth. These days if you've got the right investment plan you can turn Wealth back into Eden. You can buy a palatial mountaintop estate with environmentally friendly outbuildings and a view unmarred by any sign of human habitation. For $15,000 a person, you can take an expedition, advertised in *Natural History* magazine, to Antarctica or the Galapagos or the Serengeti. You can spend a week at Thayer Lake Lodge in Alaska admiring the grizzlies or at the Ariau Jungle Tower Hotel in the Amazon watching the monkeys swing by. One hundred and fifty years ago, Thoreau could walk to the edge of his town and find wilderness. These days if you go looking for wildness without a sizable cash reserve, you're liable to find yourself camping in a state park amongst the RVs. But if you can drop $40,000 on a vacation, wildness is yours. The Cell Phone Naturalists seem to have discovered a new gospel of wealth: Money can be purifying if you spend it on things that permit you to experience nature. That $600 walking-around money in your pocket won't corrupt you if you keep it in a waterproof canvas wallet. Technology won't distance you from nature if you use it to hammer your way up a rock face in Nepal.

But ultimately you might find that your concept of nature changes. The old-fashioned naturalists saw nature as a remedy for and escape from society. But the Cell Phone Naturalist walks around the forest looking for a place to set up a wilderness office. He's using his newfound wealth and the geographical freedom of the telecommunications age to renovate his work-life, to move to Montana or Idaho or New Hampshire, where he can tap on his keyboard in a study with wilderness views. Nature isn't the alternative to society, it's a more wholesome setting for society.

And the Cell Phone Naturalist tackles nature. For past generations, the simple life meant renouncing ambition and social mobility. But the Cell Phone Naturalist takes his ambition with him. He doesn't just sit in the forest, he treks up a mountain, climbs a glacier, bikes to the continental divide. He turns nature into an obstacle course, a series of ordeals he can conquer. After all, why does he need all those polyester coverings and the rest of his high-tech gear? Because he is challenging nature on his own terms. In nature, animals flee cold and seek warmth and comfort. The Cell Phone Naturalist flees comfort and seeks cold and deprivation. He does it because he takes on life as a series of achievement tests. And even the people who don't actually go on expeditions to the North Pole are turned on by products associated with that sort of conquest. Images of nature have always been used to sell things, but if you page through the glossy magazines these days, the nature you see is a frozen mountain ridge or a rocky summit that can be conquered with the right SUV or watch or jacket or sweater or credit card.

THEY ARE NOT RENOUNCING MONEY FOR SIMPLICITY; THEY'RE USING MONEY TO BUY TURBO-CHARGED NATURAL EXPERIENCES.

Sooner or later the rise of the Cell Phone Naturalist is bound to have consequences for our environmental politics. It's bound to weaken the polarity between the economically minded developers on the one hand and the romantically minded environmentalists on the other.

In some places it already has. One of the most important events in recent environmental history was the formation of the Quincy Library Group. In the mid-1990s a group of local environmentalists, citizen leaders, and timber executives started meeting at the public library in Quincy, California, to work out an agreement preserving, yet allowing harvesting in, the Plumas National Forest, which covers a huge expanse of northern California. The compromise they forged won the approval of the Clinton administration and

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the House of Representatives. But the San Francisco and Washington offices of the old-fashioned environmental groups like the Wilderness Society, the Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club declared war on the agreement, seeing any effort to bridge the divide with big timber as a deal with the devil. They are still fighting it in the Senate. The Quincy Library agreement probably has flaws, but it is a harbinger of the sort of reconciliation of environmental concerns and private-sector development that is a natural outgrowth of Cell Phone Naturalism.

Of course sophisticated interest groups of every stripe pay lip service to reconciliation. But not all the talk is phony. And it's striking that the groups that have worked most effectively to harmonize nature and economic well-being are not conservative or liberal, but libertarian. Two Montana-based foundations, the Political Economy Research Center (PERC) and the Foundation for Research on Economics and the Environment (FREE), have been busy bringing economists and environmentalists together for years. They devise ways of using economic incentives to encourage environmental preservation. For example, in Africa they favor giving villages a stake in the wealth derived from elephant hunting so that herdsmen have an interest in keeping the numbers of animals up. In the United States, they'd like to reverse the budgetary arrangements that give the Forest Service an incentive to cut down trees for off-budget revenue. I'm not qualified to judge the practicality of these plans. But in their behavior and outlook, the people at PERC and FREE, as well as those at more mainstream groups such as the Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Defense Fund, seem to exemplify the coming environmentalism, which is neither enthralled by the beneficence of corporations nor hostile to the development of wealth.

According to people who follow these trends, there are numerous signs that the orthodoxy of the environmental movement is slowly being affected by this cultural shift. There are more fissures within groups than before. And a lot of Quincy Library-style mediation is going on in the states. State groups are deferring less to scientific authority as the source for uniform standards. Instead, they are seeking to devolve environmental controversies to the local level, where flexibility is greatest and practical tradeoffs can be arranged. Lynn Scarlett of the Reason Foundation compares the situation to welfare reform. National groups are feuding along the old lines, but the states are moving ahead, and by the time Washington gets around to reform, much of the work will have been completed.

It's funny the way changes in technology can alter our perceptions of nature. Yesterday's rivals may be today's allies. And, by the way, once I found a jacket in my size on the mezzanine at REI, I started to feel reconciled to high-tech polyester. I even discovered I could quite easily traverse the obstacles before me. I made it past the rain chamber, where you can test your all-weather gear. I crossed the boot section and followed the little forest trail that allows you to try out your footwear. I walked through the nature art gallery and past the Park Service Information booth in the middle of the book section. And finally there opened up in front of me the glorious vista of the coffee shop: a vast range of mission furniture and a paradise of multicultural aromas. There it was.

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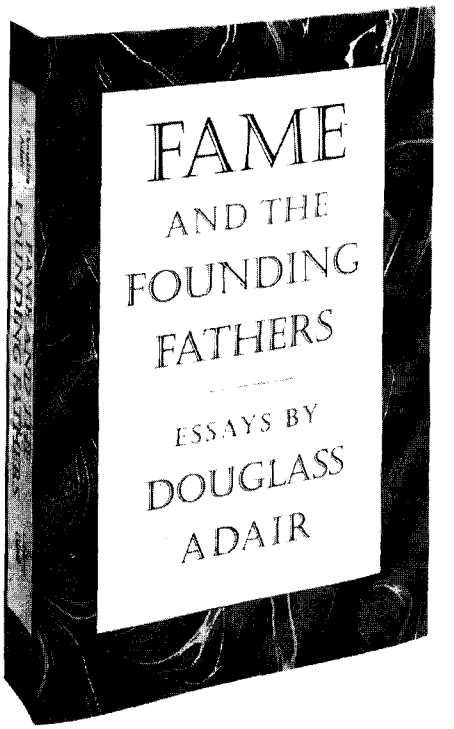

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SPECIAL FALL BOOKS ISSUE

Posing as Poetry

The Career of the New York Poets

By Christopher Caldwell

With *The Last Avant-Garde*, the literary critic and poet David Lehman has published an encomium to Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and James Schuyler. The four major poets of the "New York School" set out in the 1950s to change American verse, working from the principle that, because they found themselves so endlessly fascinating, their thoughts must reflect deep, universal meanings. Frank O'Hara's reflection in his "Autobiographia Literaria" stands as their credo:

> *And here I am, the*
> *center of all beauty!*
> *writing these poems*
> *Imagine!*

O'Hara was an influential art curator killed at age forty in a bizarre dune-buggy accident on Fire Island in 1966. Ashbery, who spent much of the 1950s and '60s in Paris, is hailed by some literary critics as the most important American poet since Wallace Stevens. Schuyler, who died in 1991, was a depressive alcoholic, in and out of mental hospitals for much of his adult life until winning a Pulitzer prize in 1980. Koch is a Columbia University professor who injected a slapstick vein into modern poetry and pioneered poetry workshops for schoolchildren and senior citizens.

Ashbery, O'Hara, and Koch met at Harvard. Ashbery, O'Hara, and Schuyler were gay and art critics. Ashbery, Koch, and Schuyler lived for long periods in Europe. All more or less considered themselves heirs to William Carlos Williams's use of the American vernacular in poetry. They admired the French surrealists and most Soviet poets. They considered the high-modernist tradition of Pound and Eliot a suffocating one.

The art-gallery impresario John Bernard Myers dubbed them the "New York School" in the early 1950s. He meant it to echo (and, not incidentally, to promote) the New York School of abstract-expressionist painters, all of them drinking pals of the poets. Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning were then arguing through their spattered, daubed, and dripped paintings that the painter shouldn't imitate nature but declare that he himself is nature. Painting could be about nothing other than painting.

Photos: Doubleday

David Lehman
The Last Avant-Garde
The Making of the New York School of Poets
Doubleday, 433 pp., $27.50

All four poets sought, in different ways, to show that the same was true for poetry, "that the mind of the poet, rather than the world, could be the true subject of the poem," as Lehman puts it, "and that it was possible for a poem to be (or to perform) a statement without making a statement." While poems about painting—Koch's "The Artist," Ashbery's "The Painter," O'Hara's "Why I Am Not a Painter," and Schuyler's collaboration with the painter Fairfield Porter—made up only a tiny fraction of their output, the consciously elaborated link with painting proved a successful shtick, just as Myers had thought it would be. Even as they railed against American materialism, they were being marketed like toothpaste.

There are two broad genres of New York School poetry. First are the un-"poeticized" autobiographical fragments that O'Hara called his "I do this I do that" poems. The central document of this tendency was the 1959 manifesto of "Personism" in which O'Hara wrote,

> I went to work and wrote a poem for this person. While I was writing it I was realizing that if I wanted to I could use the telephone instead of writing the poem and so Personism was born. . . . It puts the poem squarely between the poet and the person. . . . The poem is at last between two persons instead of two pages.

"I don't think my experiences are clarified or made beautiful for myself or anyone else," O'Hara added. "They are just there in whatever form I can find them." A taste-maker in modern painting from his perch as

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curator at the Museum of Modern Art, O'Hara seemed to be urging a spontaneous, democratic culture in which anyone could play.

But he was urging no such thing. It turns out that not all persons are created equal in Personist poetry. In "The Day Lady Died," for example, O'Hara composes an elegy of sorts for Billie Holiday:

in the GOLDEN GRIFFIN I get a little Verlaine
for Patsy with drawings by Bonnard, although I do
think of Hesiod, trans. Richmond Lattimore or
Brendan Behan's new play or Le Balcon *or* Les Nègres
of Genet, but I don't, I stick with Verlaine
after practically going to sleep with quandariness.

For Lehman, "part of the poem's charm lies in its mix of populist and elitist elements: a hamburger and a malted and 'a little Verlaine,' a trip to the bank to cash a check, the purchase of exotic cigarettes and liqueurs."

That is much too generous. "The Day Lady Died" is a combination of self-congratulation and piss-on-a-tree territoriality. Its first purpose is to celebrate Frank O'Hara (not Billie Holiday, who isn't mentioned until the very end of the poem) as the center of all beauty. And its second purpose is to erect class barriers to show the reader why O'Hara's poetry differs from the scribblings of a lovelorn high-school student in Shaker Heights: *She* doesn't read Jean Genet.

O'Hara's self-involvement is large enough that it can reduce everything to matters of his taste, as in "Personal Poem":

we go eat some fish and some ale it's
cool but crowded we don't like Lionel Trilling
we decide, we like Don Allen we don't like
Henry James so much we like Herman Melville

Lehman thinks a bit of biographical detail makes the poem more explicable: Diana Trilling, wife of the critic, had written a long article in *Partisan Review* lacerating the New York School and the Beat poets as intellectual frauds.

James Schuyler and John Ashbery listening to Kenneth Koch read.

What Lehman doesn't mention, in this context at least, is that Don Allen was the editor of the anthology *New American Poetry, 1945-1960* (1960). Allen flacked various poets—most notably O'Hara and Allen Ginsberg—who were too slack, unlyrical, and fluffy for Louis Simpson and Donald Hall's influential *New Poets of Britain and America* (1957), which showcased Thom Gunn, James Merrill, Anthony Hecht, and Philip Larkin. This "battle of the anthologies," as it has come to be known, gave the poets of the New York School a new lease on life. In short, Allen was someone who could help O'Hara a great deal.

And yet, it would be wrong to dismiss New York School poems as slapdash diaries. In John Ashbery, the school produced a poet whose work moves *away* from self-revelation. Ashbery seeks to create the shape or the trajectory of a poetic thought without giving the poem a subject—to see if poetry can have form without content. The technique is made almost explicit in his "Paradoxes and Oxymorons":

This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level.
Look at it talking to you. You look out a window
Or pretend to fidget. You have it but you don't have it.
You miss it, it misses you. You miss each other.

The problem is that such post-modern-sounding abstractions shoot too low. "You miss it, it misses you" is a description not of poetry but of *bad* poetry. Practically every poet who has ever written has believed that a connection—even a transcendent connection—between the poet and the reader is a large part of what poetry is about. Is Ashbery rejecting this older understanding of poetry because it's stale or because it's difficult to achieve?

It's hard to say, because in his later poems—like "Baltimore," from his recent book, *Wakefulness*—Ashbery moves so far from any recognizable subject that no one can say what he's doing: *Two were alive. One came round the corner / clipclopping. Three were the saddest snow ever seen in Prairie City.*

The strange deadness of such work is an indication that poetry is poorly suited to painterly abstraction. Throw paint at a canvas, and you get color, shape, and texture. They may be meaningless in themselves, but they are at least amenable to a sympathetic viewer's provision of his own meanings.

Language, however, is not paint. It has no color, and piles of words don't automatically resolve themselves into forms. All language has is meaning and sound. If you throw language at a page, the meaning disappears altogether, and you're left, if you're lucky, with euphony or onomatopoeia. But those have been around in English poetry since the beginning—think of "Lhude sing Cuckoo"—and every English poet before Ashbery, O'Hara, Koch, and Schuyler knew that it

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wasn't enough by itself to make a poem.

In *The Last Avant-Garde*, Lehman credits the New York School with a great deal of humor, and the work of Kenneth Koch provides some support. In "When the Sun Tries to Go On," for example, he composed the purest nonsense-poem in the language. He is also a brilliant parodist, as, for example, in his send-up of Ezra Pound:

For who hath eaten phooey
Returneth not unto paradise
Dem mudder f—ers doan unnerstan me
Said the Princess Toy Ling A.D. 1922
Dey doan unnerstan nuttin but smut
That was the year the doves fell at Livorgno

Koch is the only one of the group who is comfortable working in metered verse, although such efforts—his ottava-rima cycles *Ko* and *The Duplications*, at any rate—are drenched in irony and silliness. But even when Koch is working in the chit-chatty idiom of O'Hara, he is never pompous. His long poems may not be great, but they make delightful running gags, the best of which is his *Art of Love*.

Lehman, however, confuses Koch with the whole school. In fact, one of the distinctive features of the New York School is *lack* of humor. O'Hara has a kind of insistent, browbeating hedonism that Lehman mistakes for humor. Ashbery has a snobby punsmanship that Lehman mistakes for humor. (Not even Lehman can find anything in James Schuyler to mistake for humor.)

When Lehman says humor, he means camp. There was a voice, particularly in O'Hara, that sounded very distinctive at the time. Today, it is clear that it was often simply the inside language of Manhattan gays. Marjorie Perloff, who began her career with a 1977 book on Frank O'Hara, now marvels at how reticent she and other critics were to acknowledge this gayness: "'Late Victorian camp,' 'Paterian pop,' 'mental chatter and drift'—twenty years later we recognize these as code terms for 'queer.'"

If the critics mistook a *dialect* for a voice, it must be said that the poets did as well. In a typical effort, James Schuyler writes:

Is a wet dream too much to ask for? Time for a cigarette. Why are pleasures bad for you?
But how good the tobacco smoke tastes. Uhm. Blow smoke rings if you can. Or blow me: I could do with a little carnal relief.

Lehman calls the New York School poems "brave in their homosexual details." But when, one wants to ask, was the last time an American poet suffered for writing about homosexuality? 1845? Modern American poetry was *founded* by a homosexual, and since Walt Whitman's time, homosexuality has been only slightly less central to American poetry than to American hairdressing. And yet one still reads such tracts of homosexual self-pity as Brad Gooch's biography of O'Hara, *City Poet*, in which the school's entire achievement is summed up as an achievement in gay rights.

The problem is the opposite one: The poetry is not adventurous enough. Strip the New York School poets of their biographies—of that part of their work the sophisticates congratulate themselves on catching—and all you're left with is a long-winded, Will Rogersy wryness, a patting-oneself-on-the-back-while-stating-the-obvious. These poets are *hokey*.

Schuyler's "A Few Days" is dedicated to a proposition—

Tomorrow is another day, but no better than today if you only realize it.
Let's love today, the what we have now, this day, not today or tomorrow or yesterday, but this passing moment, that will not come again.

—that Horace handled in two words, *carpe* and *diem*. And O'Hara's "Metaphysical Poem" calls to mind the rock lyrics that appeared on the inside flap of those 1970s double phonograph albums whose primary purpose was to aid in cleaning marijuana:

When do you want to go
I'm not sure I want to go there
where do you want to go
any place

Even John Ashbery, when he surfaces into comprehensibility, utters thoughts that, however much critics may have macerated them, are basically notes stuck to the refrigerator door:

What is writing?
Well, in my case, it's getting down on paper
Not thoughts, exactly, but ideas, maybe:
Ideas about thoughts. Thoughts is too grand a word.

or

But I don't set much stock in things
Beyond the weather and the certainties of living and dying:
The rest is optional.

But then the New York School of poets were never celebrated for their

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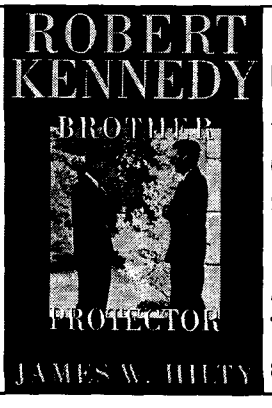

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meaning. Quite the contrary, it is for their *unmeaning* that the critics loved them. The Harvard poetry doyenne Helen Vendler marvels at the way "The Old Place" (O'Hara's poem named after a gay bar) "flouts the whole male world and its relentless demand for ideologies, causes, and systems of significance." Lehman describes the New York poets as "aesthetes in revolt against a moralist's universe."

But in truth the New York School poets were relentless in their own demand for ideologies and causes. (Isn't that what avant-gardes do?) They were far more moralists than they were aesthetes, and they were dogmatic in their hatreds.

Sometimes the hatred was generalized, as in O'Hara's attack on the "pious attitudes of those true spiritual bigots whose faces are turned toward eternity and who therefore can see nothing." But it was often more personalized, too. Mary McCarthy, who ridiculed the poets who hung out at the San Remo bar, was heartily despised. So were the Trillings and Robert Lowell. James Schuyler, who worked for a few months with W. H. Auden, conceived a deep resentment for the British poet and urged Koch, who was reviewing an Auden volume, "to lay the book out like a split cod." The New York School's enemies, said Schuyler, were "the campus dry-heads who wistfully descend tum-ti-tumming from Yeats out of Graves with a big kiss for Mother England."

The old guard against which this "last avant-garde" arose were the high modernists like Pound and Eliot and their handmaidens, the new critics. The stultifying demand of poetic erudition by these poets and critics was harmful to the extent that it cowed poets into believing they had to have read Propertius and the personal papers of John Quincy Adams before they could put pen to paper. The burden of showy erudition evolved into a kind of guild-style protectionism for establishment poets.

But smashing that guild system was not what the New York School poets were about. Take O'Hara's "Having a Coke with You": *I would rather look at you than all the portraits in the world / except possibly for the Polish Rider occasionally and anyway it's in the Frick*. O'Hara is not opening up poetry to those excluded by the High Modernist establishmentarians. He is using his art-world references to keep the riff-raff out, just as Pound does with his literary ones. If O'Hara is taking poetry out of the academy, it's only to move it to the Hamptons.

It's easy to share Lehman's fascination with the New York of the 1950s, "a time when the life of the artist had a certain seedy glamour, rents were cheap, the subway safe, and the art market had not yet become the plaything of the very rich." But it's hard to share Lehman's claim that the poets who inhabited that world constituted an avant-garde in any poetic sense. The New York School poets left us a new style of being a poet. That's not the same thing as leaving a new style of poetry. ♦

NURTURING CHILDREN'S NATURE

Why Parents Still Matter

By Marguerite Kelly

With her latest study, child-development psychologist Judith Rich Harris has given us a landmark book that provokes praise and outrage on almost every page—with good reasons for both.

Judith Rich Harris
The Nurture Assumption
Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do
Free Press, 480 pp., $26

The Nurture Assumption is original and often wise, witty and warm, and so precise that its author uses "rear" instead of "raise" to speak of what parents do to children (which may make her the first person to do that since my Aunt Kay put her hands on her hips to tell me, all those years ago, "Honey, you rear children; you raise pigs"). Unfortunately, *The Nurture Assumption* is also deeply mistaken, crippled by a thesis far larger than its author can defend.

Harris begins by blasting present-day psychologists for twisting statistics to suit their "intuition" and for saying that parents are responsible for the way their children behave. And then she does some serious intuiting herself, telling us that a child's behavior depends much more on his genes and his friends than on his parents.

She does admit that babies need parental figures because parents "are an aspect of the environment, like light and pattern, that a baby's brain needs to develop normally. But they may not be necessary for children over the age of five or six," she adds. "For older children, a stable peer group may be more important." Here is Harris's group-socialization theory at its most startling: "Children would become the same sort of adults if we left their lives outside the home unchanged—left them in their schools and their neighborhoods—but switched all the parents around."

Marguerite Kelly is a syndicated columnist and author who writes on family issues.

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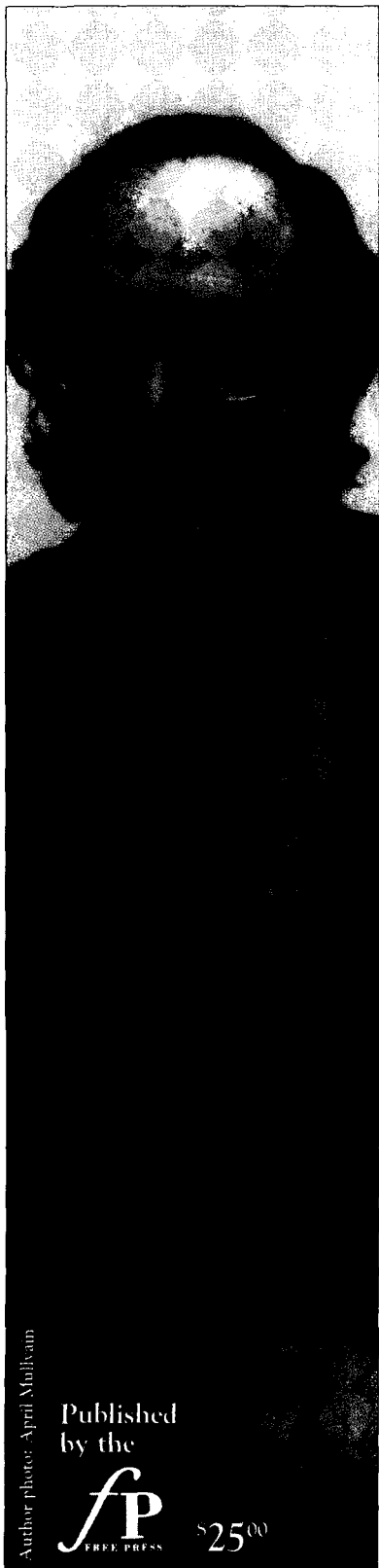

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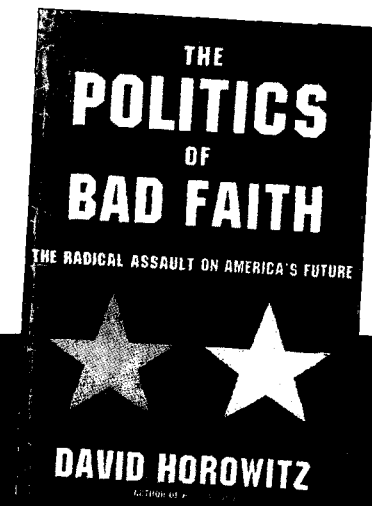

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If nothing else, her theory offers an emotional balm for any parent who has ever agonized over a wayward child—including Harris. Her younger daughter, now a successful mother and nurse, once walked on the wild side, and the author's poignant memories of that rebellion still blister with a pain that makes her sound sometimes defensive and at other times almost euphoric. Since children want to conform, it must be other children, rather than parents, who decide their fate. "The world that children share with their peers . . . shapes their behavior and modifies the characteristics they were born with and . . . determines the sort of people they will be when they grow up." And the children let themselves be shaped, not because they want to be successful adults, she says, but because they want to be successful children.

It's a theory custom-made to soothe a sorry mother's heart, and as the theories of psychologists and psychiatrists so often do, it comes along at the right time. Parents have begun to suspect that they're overdoing it a bit, and Harris gives them a wonderful excuse to lighten up.

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Freud was another one whose ideas satisfied the needs of an era. When he said that everything a mother did—or didn't do—affected her child for life, mothers were starting to own more time-saving appliances and to have more free time than they ever had before—and were feeling less important by the minute. Freudian theory encouraged them to focus on their children with a single-mindedness the world had never known.

By the 1960s they were chauffeuring their children everywhere—whether they lived in the far-flung suburbs or not—and by the end of the 1970s they were giving them more toys and clothes and shoes then they could ever wear out. In the late 1980s they upped the ante again and began to program every minute of their children's day, pushing them into after-school classes, organizing them into teams—and incidentally robbing them of the many goofy pleasures that happen when children spontaneously build a fort in the backyard or put together a pick-up game of football on the playground. Today parents are so busy working to pay for all this attention that they say they have no time to call their own. And neither do their children, poor dears, who are dancing as fast as they can to keep up with their well-planned little lives.

According to Harris's logic, these efforts that parents have made for the past fifty years have hardly mattered a whit. There is no relation between the goodness of the home and the goodness of the child, the author says, short of a really rotten home.

"The nurture assumption implies that children are born with empty brains which their parents are responsible for filling up," and this, Harris declares, is nonsense. She then attempts to demolish hundreds of socialization studies to prove her case.

In some ways, she is wonderfully right. Genes are responsible for much of a child's behavior and intelligence and for all of his looks. In many ways, however, she is terribly wrong. A young child is profoundly influenced by his parents, siblings, and assorted relatives at first, and as he gets older he expands his circle to include a few buddies from nursery school, then a kindergarten teacher, a new neighbor, a fellow Scout—adding and subtracting friends as he grows up. A child doesn't dismiss his family; he enlarges it.

If the parents are supportive and the family functions well, the child will develop the character he needs to withstand temptation, but if they are too critical or too rigid or too permissive, his core will be weak and he will either turn into a loner or he will turn to his friends—to the family he has made. At that point—and only at that point—his behavior will depend on them.

The child who feels good about himself—because he feels safe and loved and competent—will choose friends who have good values and good instincts. But if his self-esteem is low, he will choose friends who mirror his own image. This finding has been replicated in many studies, but is not mentioned by Harris.

The ignoring of contrary data is one of the major problems of *The Nurture Assumption*: The book is generally well researched, but its author's citations are highly selective. Harris reports—and usually condemns—most child-development research based on "socialization" (as the nurture assumption is called), but she ignores any other research that might explain a child's behavior and perhaps upset her own conclusions.

Judith Wallerstein's much-cited work on the evils of divorce, for example, Harris calls "worthless," adding that most children of divorce do fine "in the long run." And as for all those studies about troubled children in step-families and foster fami-

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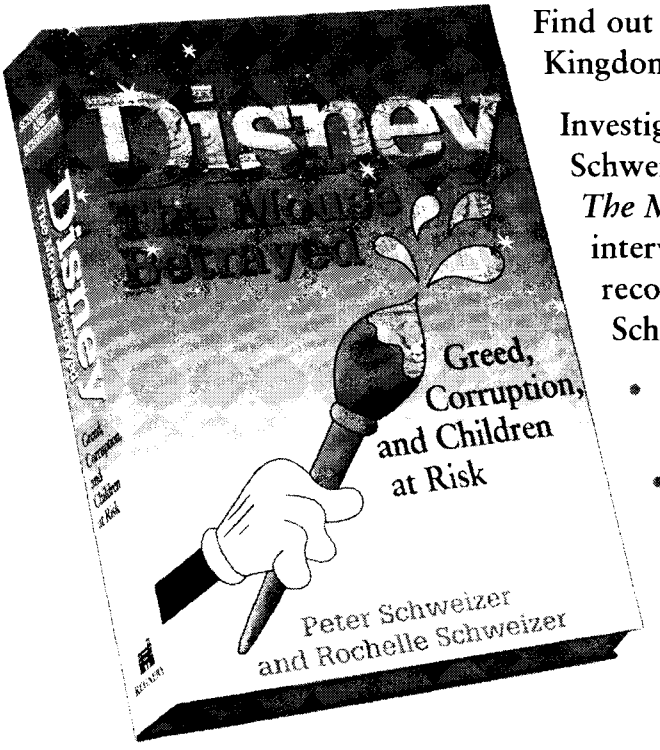

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lies who are wrestling with their losses, all Harris thinks they prove is that the children were moved too much and didn't have stable peer groups.

She rightly slams Frank Sulloway for telling us that the birth order of children affects their behavior outside the home as well as in it. But she simply dismisses the claim, made by Harvard's Howard Gardner, that children manifest various kinds of intelligence (and indeed Harris doesn't seem to have read Gardner carefully enough to discover that he identifies not "several" but eight distinct kinds). And though she considers genetic effects, she never talks about the effects of a child's body chemistry.

More important, she mentions almost none of the real players in child development. Arnold Gesell is cited only once, although his institute defined every step of a child's physical, mental, and emotional development, and T. Berry Brazelton isn't mentioned at all, despite his fine research on the early years.

Harris has a good deal to say about personality, but she doesn't cite Stella Chess or even Carl Jung for their seminal explanations of various temperaments and the way they mold behavior. There's not a line about Erik Erikson either, although he told us how we grow psychologically from ages one to seventy, or Jean Piaget, who delineated our mental stages, or Lawrence Kohlberg, who also thought that moral development followed a sequential pattern. Whether you agree with Piaget and Kohlberg, or prefer Carol Gilligan on morality and gender differences, their theories at least deserve what they don't get in *The Nurture Assumption*: a thoughtful consideration of a child's budding nature and how it might influence him far more than his friends or his parents at certain ages.

When teenagers break laws, Harris says, they do it because they're following their friends—which is no doubt a real factor—but Kohlberg also points out that youngsters before their mid-teens can't think well in abstractions and therefore they can't internalize their conscience. It takes supervision to keep a child out of trouble.

Harris does admit that parents can help children choose the right friends—by living in a good neighborhood and sending them to a good school—but she says this only works until they're about ten. She's wrong. Parents can encourage the right kind of friends until their children leave home, just by the rules they set. Rowdies never like to hang out with teenagers who have to live by rules much stricter than the ones under which they themselves live.

Harris's book will color the next generation of arguments about child development, and it may even correct some excessive parental attention, but it suffers from the same affliction that the author finds in the "nurture assumption": It's selling parents a bill of goods.

Each child is born to be a certain type of person, and each child is reared in a slightly different style, because his parents are different, too. But every child must grow up with a philosophy of fairness and honesty, respect and affection, trust and freedom, kindness and generosity, responsibility and accountability. And he gets that philosophy from his parents, not his friends. ♦

ELEANOR & THE HISTORIANS

Looking for Lesbians Under Every Bed

By Noemie Emery

Biography is a dishonest science. No author can slip himself entirely into the skin of another, seeing life through other eyes. But some biographies are particularly dishonest, written with a particular political agenda and aimed at a particular constituency the author wants to placate and appease. And sometimes the result is a battle, as biographers with rival agendas and constituencies go to war over their subject's helpless body.

Rodger Streitmatter, ed.
Empty Without You
The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok
Free Press, 304 pp., $25

This is what happened back in 1974, when Fawn Brodie claimed that Thomas Jefferson had not only had a full-fledged extra-marital affair while in France but also had a decades-long liaison and numerous children with Sally Hemings, the house slave who was his dead wife's half-sister. Immediately, a claque of stodgy white male biographers issued non-paternity declarations on behalf of the president, while historians of the class-race-and-gender school declared their thrill at learning that the racist, sexist, classist pig of a male-chauvinist founding father was as bad as they always assumed him to be.

And something quite similar happened four years later, when a woman writing a children's book about Lorena Hickok, the pioneering female journalist of the 1920s, came across a collection of letters suggesting in tone and phrasing that Hickok's close friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt was more than platonic.

A frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *Noemie Emery lives in Alexandria, Virginia.*

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The suggestion was immediately denied by traditional liberals like Arthur Schlesinger Jr., fearful that it might drive down the Roosevelts' stock among middle Americans. And it was immediately trumpeted by the untraditional liberals who had already made a policy heroine out of the former first lady and could now declare her a cultural heroine as well. In 1992, feminist scholar Blanche Wiesen Cook came out with the first volume of her revisionist study, in which Mrs. Roosevelt—suppressed, beaten down, and all but destroyed by a patriarchal system in the persons of her elegant cad of a husband and his impossible mother—found liberation and happiness, first in her friendships with lesbian women and then as a happy lesbian herself.

Since 1994, this thesis has been strenuously and, on the whole, successfully denied by many responsible Roosevelt scholars. But now Rodger Streitmatter, a professor of journalism at American University, has collected and published in *Empty Without You: The Intimate Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok* three hundred letters between Mrs. Roosevelt and Hickok, spinning around them a tale of an intense, two-year love affair inside the women's thirty-year friendship.

The story begins in late 1932, as New York governor Franklin D. Roosevelt nears his inexorable victory over the incumbent Herbert Hoover. But Roosevelt's wife is moved by the prospect to near-panic. She dreads life in the White House, thinks it will shatter her new independence, fears it will damage the delicate balance—half the week in Manhattan, working and teaching; half the week in Albany, serving as hostess—that permits her damaged marriage to survive. She is afraid of being reduced to a hostess, afraid she will fail as a hostess, afraid of becoming once more the shadow of a man with whom she now shares little. At the Democratic convention, she sends to Louis M. Howe a letter saying she would not move into the White House. (Howe tears the letter to pieces.) Her self-confidence—bruised from the beginning by her horrible mother and damaged by her husband's affairs—has never been shakier.

Into this emotional tumult steps Lorena Hickok, a brash professional woman who exudes a dynamic competence. "Hick" not only adores the soon-to-be first lady, she sees her as having the possibility to become a remarkable woman. Warmed by the approval of someone she admires, Eleanor recovers her spirits. It is Hickok who tells Mrs. Roosevelt to hold regular press conferences and write regularly for magazines and newspapers—with Hickok giving them the benefit of her hard-won professional skill.

In that brief, intense time, Hickok becomes Eleanor's mirror. The two women correspond several times a day, exchange gifts and pictures, go together on trips, and make vague plans to retire together in some unspecified future. To Hickok, a homely woman who had survived a terrible background (she claimed to have been beaten and raped by her father), it all seemed too good to last. And she was right.

By the end of 1934, a change appeared in the tone of Eleanor's letters. She is no longer quite so terribly needy. She seems to be pulling away. Her public appearances are working out nicely. She and her husband work out a way to serve both themselves and each other. He finds it useful to have an activist spouse whom he can endorse or disavow as he needs. She finds it useful to keep people guessing as to how much of his backing she has.

It is at this point that the story becomes less like *Pygmalion* and more like a same-sex version of *A Star Is Born*. Hickok slips from being the life-giving confidant to being merely one of the many satellites who revolve around famous and powerful people, begging for attention the stars are too busy to give. And she has made the fatal mistake against which

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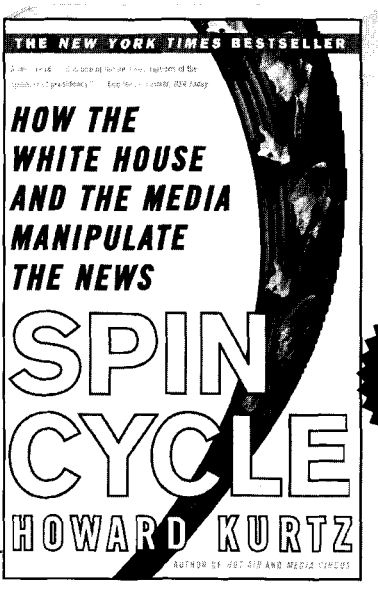

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feminists always warn women: She has given up her own identity to live through and for another person. At the start of the administration, Hickok—in a decision she later regretted bitterly—left her newspaper job to work for the Roosevelts. When not on the road, she lived in the White House, sleeping like a dog or a valet on a camp-bed outside Eleanor's door.

There were scenes, complaints, recriminations, and apologies, but Hickok inexorably faded from the center of Eleanor Roosevelt's life, becoming reclusive, eccentric, and querulous. While Eleanor blooms into a second youth, the much younger Hickok seems to age suddenly—Eleanor's occasional notes to her reading like notes from the world to a cranky old woman. Two-thirds of the letters in Rodger Streitmatter's *Empty Without You* date from 1933 to 1935; the letters from 1945 to 1962 occupy only twenty-six pages.

As she fades, Hickok does not wear well as a character. The glimpses these letters give of Eleanor Roosevelt's character, however, are fascinating. A surprising modesty and not-so-surprising sorrow seem permanent parts of her life. "I truly don't think that what I do or say makes much difference," she muses. About her husband, she seems neither bitter nor angry, but burned out and almost numb. "I kept thinking of the mess we had made of our young lives here and how strange it was that after all these years I should return here as indifferent and uninterested as a stranger," she wrote Hickok from Hyde Park in 1934. "I feel, as usual, completely objective and oh, Lord, so *indifferent*," she wrote during the 1936 campaign. But "one can be personally indifferent and still do one's duty," she added later that year.

Hickok, a life-long, out-and-out lesbian, was surely besotted by Eleanor Roosevelt. But was Mrs. Roosevelt "in love" with her? The evidence is mixed, but tends to run against the lesbian tale Streitmatter concocts in *Empty Without You*. The first clutch of letters from 1933 to 1934 reveals an emotional urgency perhaps a shade too intense for a putative friendship, with much talk of kissing pictures, kissing lips, touching hair and faces, holding in one another's arms, and hugging. This sounds like too much for an average friendship, but the descriptions stay non-specific. Did the emotional urgency stem from an erotic feeling, or Mrs. Roosevelt's need to connect with her one source of confidence? Without further evidence, we simply can't know.

Free Press

Eleanor Roosevelt and Lorena Hickok in 1934.

Mrs. Roosevelt did have a great deal of contact with androgynous and homosexual people: Her closest friends in the mid-1920s were lesbian couples, among them Nan Cook and Marion Dickerman with whom she built a cottage at Hyde Park. In his 1982 volume, *Love, Eleanor: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Friends*, Joseph Lash notes that her first model and idol was the lesbian Marie Souvestre, whose Swiss boarding school trained a generation of upper-class women. And her father, Elliott (perhaps in reaction to his brother, the hypermale Theodore Roosevelt), was known in his family as "Nellie," or "she."

But those who knew her insist that while Mrs. Roosevelt loved her lesbian friends as people, she found their lifestyles unnatural and was, in many ways, a conventional, churchgoing moralist. Peter Collier, co-author of a multi-generational account of both Roosevelt families, also dismisses the homosexual thesis.

And then there are the clues from the Roosevelt-Hickok letters themselves. "I know you often have a feeling for me which for some reason or another I may not return in kind, but I feel I love you just the same," Eleanor wrote on May 13, 1935. And three months earlier, she had also written: "Hick, dearest, of course you should have had a husband and children and it would have made you happy if you loved him and in any case it would have satisfied certain cravings and given you someone on whom to lavish the love and devotion you have to keep down all the time." Streitmatter includes these two letters, but dismisses them as "perplexing," never admitting that they

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undermine his thesis. Meanwhile, Cook charges a conspiracy of supression and silence to stifle what she sees as the truth.

Like the Jefferson questions, the Roosevelt mystery is being fought, not on the grounds of probability, but on the bloody terrain of the culture wars. The fight nowadays is between the two wings of the Democratic party the Roosevelts once unified: what might be called the Scoop Jackson wing and the George McGovern wing. The Jacksonites, who think their party has become altogether too strange since the late 1960s, fight the effort to define as deviant one of the most widely loved of their national idols. The McGovernites of the cultural Left—the gays, the feminists, and the gender-benders—fight even harder to make themselves mainstream through association with notable figures.

Historians from both these camps follow their own interests and give their readers what they want to believe. In each case, supportive facts are emphasized and inconvenient ones explained away as deceptive. What the subjects themselves might have felt or thought is secondary to what the writers want them to have felt or thought. The treatment of the Hickok-Roosevelt papers since their discovery has not been edifying. But that, of course, is the old, old story of biography, the least credible of sciences. One should consume all its products with care. ♦

Killing the Babies and Saving the Halibut

Peter Singer Writes the Life of His Disciple

By Wesley J. Smith

Peter Singer is a major player in the world of ideas. The Australian moral philosopher is probably best known as the ideological father of the modern movement for animal rights. But among academics and members of the intelligentsia, he is equally famous for being a stark utilitarian, one of the premier voices calling for the destruction of the traditional Western ethic that views all human life as having inherently equal moral worth.

Peter Singer
Ethics Into Action
Henry Spira and the Animal Rights Movement
Rowman & Littlefield, 192 pp., $22.95

All this makes Singer a very busy man. He is a philosophy professor. He lectures throughout the world. He publishes frequent articles, both in academic journals and the middlebrow press. He has written several books, including *Practical Ethics*, a standard text in many college philosophy departments. His name made the news most recently when the *Wall Street Journal* and other newspapers howled in outrage at the appointment this summer of Singer—author, for instance, of a notorious 1995 London *Spectator* article entitled "Killing Babies Isn't Always Wrong"—to a prestigious chair of bioethics at Princeton University's Center for Human Values.

Wesley J. Smith is attorney for the International Anti-Euthanasia Taskforce and author of Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder.

Thus, when Singer took the time and effort to write a book-length biography of the late animal-rights agitator Henry Spira, it seemed reasonable to assume that there must be something special about Spira: his personal qualities and his ability to inspire others, perhaps, or the lasting significance of his work. Instead, despite the author's obvious affection for the man, Spira comes across in *Ethics Into Action* as a lonely misanthrope whose burning passion for the rights of animals (ignited by Singer's own 1973 essay "Animal Liberation," published in the *New York Review of Books*) proves only a rather sad substitute for the human intimacy he seemed to lack.

Spira's pre-animal-rights life is nearly a caricature of the radical left of his generation and fills only one chapter of Singer's book. Born into a Belgian Jewish family in 1927, he arrived in the United States in 1940, his family in full flight from the Nazi onslaught. He became an enthusiastic Trotskyite at an early age, which alienated him from his stern businessman father. Spira rejected religious Judaism when quite young and embraced atheism. He joined the Merchant Marine toward the end of World War II, but was blacklisted from the fleet during the McCarthy era because of his overt Communist sympathies. He was drafted into the Army, but was soon ejected as a security risk.

Spira then joined the Socialist Workers party and wrote for the *Militant*, the party's newspaper. Singer rather desperately tries to ennoble Spira during these years by linking him to the civil-rights movement of the 1950s, but all Spira really did was cover some demonstrations as a reporter for the *Militant*. After Castro came to power, Spira joined the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Tiring of that, and with the blacklist at an end, Spira returned to sea for several years. Finally, he became an English teacher at Haaren High School on New York's Upper West Side.

Then, Spira read "Animal Liberation," and his life was changed forever. He became devoted to animal

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rights—so much so that at the age of fifty-five he took an early retirement from teaching to pursue the cause full time. Singer would have us believe that the rest is a history worth telling.

As envisioned by Singer and embraced by Spira, "animal rights" is not synonymous with "animal welfare"—the idea that humans have an obligation to avoid inflicting gratuitous suffering on animals and have a responsibility as stewards over the non-human life on the planet. Rejecting animal welfare because it implies that humans may use animals for medical research, clothing, and food, Singer's disciples instead insist upon speaking of "rights," because the term allows them to claim animal life as the moral equivalent of human life.

Quite what it means to speak of an animal as a bearer of rights has never been clear, but there is at least one dark consequence of animal rights that Singer actively promotes: In order to elevate the moral worth of animals, he must cheapen the moral worth of humans. Singer describes in *Ethics Into Action* Spira's conversion. Before accepting the idea of animal rights, he writes,

> I took it for granted that all human beings were equal, but I hadn't thought very hard about what this meant. It had never occurred to me that when we say that all humans are equal, we do more than include all human beings within the sphere of moral equality. We also exclude nonhuman animals from that sphere, thereby granting every member of our own species—psychopaths, infants, and the profoundly intellectually disabled included—a moral status superior to that of dogs, pigs, chimpanzees, and dolphins.

Singer's philosophy is fouled by a deep misanthropy. Indeed, for more than twenty years, his international influence steadily growing, Singer has equated discrimination based on species ("speciesism") with bigotry based on race and gender. Singer also sees no substantive difference between human slavery and animal ranching. He has outrageously compared the killing of billions of animals for food with the Holocaust.

Most insidiously, Singer argues that membership in the human race alone is insufficient grounds for possession of what are commonly known as rights—most notably the right to live. Rather, according to Singer, a "being" must earn the right to live by possessing the "relevant characteristics" of a "person." In order to qualify for that status, "an entity" must be able to reason and be self-aware. According to Singer, these requirements *exclude* all human infants and people who are cognitively disabled—whose moral value he compares directly to fish and chickens—but *include* "nonhuman animals" such as dogs, pigs, elephants, cattle, sheep, indeed, perhaps all mammals.

This view is a direct and acute threat to vulnerable and defenseless human lives. Singer's animal rights activism has led directly to his becoming one of the world's foremost proponents of infanticide. Of disabled babies, for example, he wrote in his 1994 volume *Rethinking Life and Death*,

> We may not want a child to start on life's uncertain voyage if the prospects are clouded. When this can be known at a very early stage of the voyage we may be able to make a fresh start. . . . Instead of going forward and putting all our efforts into making the best of the situation, we can still say no, and start again from the beginning.

The term "start again" is Singer's euphemism for murdering the baby, an option, Singer believes, parents should have for the first twenty-eight days of a newborn's life.

Singer's animal-rights attitudes and his support for infanticide and involuntary euthanasia of cognitively disabled people are symbiotically intertwined. Perhaps that is precisely why his disciple Henry Spira, who had a lifelong antipathy toward traditional values, was so strongly attracted to the philosophy. For it is here, deep within the darkest anti-human-life attitudes of contemporary radicalism, that the ex-Trotskyite finally found a movement to which he committed himself permanently and wholeheartedly until his death from cancer earlier this year.

Spira might have been a hopeless radical, but he was no dummy. He knew that the Singer version of animal rights would not go down well with people who confuse animal rights with concepts of animal welfare. So Spira hid his actual radical agenda. To Singer's applause, he selected as his first protest a campaign in 1975 to stop the American Museum of Natural History in New York from conducting experiments on cats. Of Spira's plans, Singer declares:

> The fact that the experimental subjects were cats was significant. Ethically, in Henry's view, it does not make any difference whether an experiment is done on a cat, a hamster, or a rat: They are all sensitive creatures capable of feeling pain. But he knew that it would be easier to arouse members of the public to protest against experiments on animals to which they could easily relate.

In other words, Spira knew that a campaign to stop the use of rats in medical experiments would be a protest to which nobody came. So, he hit upon a wolf-in-sheep's-clothing strategy: Motivate people who have great affection for cats, paint himself to the gullible media as a benevolent figure interested in preventing cruelty to pets, and disguise his true radicalism behind the benign façade of animal welfare, a concept that he actually disdained.

The campaign against the museum eventually succeeded (with the aid of then-congressman Ed Koch). Spira became something of a name in the New York media and among animal-rights and welfare activists. He incorporated Animal Rights International as his nonprofit alter-ego. Singer chortles that this allowed him to receive grant money from such traditional animal-welfare organizations

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as the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, and the Massachusetts SPCA, and it "made Henry look like more than a one-man outfit."

Armed with considerable foundation money, Spira spent the rest of his life leading grass-roots campaigns and protests, some successful and some not, the rather repetitive tales of which make up the bulk of *Ethics Into Action*. Spira was scattered in his approach to his work. He moved from protesting experiments on animals to protesting the sale of pound animals to medical laboratories, to protesting the use of animals in product testing, to protesting methods of slaughtering animals for food, to creating ads critical of fast-food chains (such as one that ran in March 1998, depicting a Kentucky Fried Chicken bucket as a toilet bowl). Spira's most notable success was his participation in the creation of the Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing, a corporate-funded nonprofit organization at Johns Hopkins University that researches alternatives to the animal testing of cosmetics and cleansers.

There is no denying that Spira's several protest successes, ironically on behalf of animal welfare instead of animal rights, were genuine if modest accomplishments of grass-roots activism. Singer's mistake is to attempt to elevate them to heroic proportions—which has the unintended effect of making Spira's animal-rights career seem like much ado about relatively little. Indeed, the lessons Spira allegedly bestowed upon future radical leaders on how to "make a difference"—"keep in touch with reality," "select a target on the basis of vulnerabilities to public opinion," "set goals that are achievable," "position issues as problems with solutions"—are utterly banal. Long before the last page of *Ethics Into Action* is turned, the reader realizes that Spira's animal-rights career is insufficiently substantial or noteworthy to carry the weight of two-hundred pages of biography.

The same cannot be said about the career of Peter Singer. Next July, Singer will leave Australia for Princeton, where for many years to come, he will teach some of the country's best and brightest students—the future physicians, theologians, business executives, and politicians—that infants are the moral equivalent of halibut and that some animals have greater moral worth than some humans. Who knows how many like Henry Spira—and worse than Henry Spira—he will find among them? ♦

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Parody

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It was a hot, dry, remorseless wind. It swept over the peaks of Litchfield County and slammed with parched fury into the soil of Oscar de la Renta's Brook Hill Farm. Each day Oscar rose at dawn and peered through the windows of his tattered Stanford White farmhouse, grimly watching as his precious soil blew away. His lone remaining tractor—a John de la Deere—sat rusting in the middle of the devastation. Oscar knew the farm was lost. Even the framboise bushes were brown and lifeless.

For a time, he'd had the best chutney farm in the whole county. He used to till his lush fields and look across the valley and see Bill Blass working his pesto ranch. On Sundays they'd get out the old Lexus and go visiting over at the Kissingers'. Oscar would bring some crab-apple jelly in an old Saks bag, and in exchange Nancy Kissinger would give him a helicopter. When the weather was exceptionally fine they'd all go down to Greenwich where Ralph Lauren kept a herd of Protestants. They'd lounge about the veranda sipping mimosas and watch the Protestants munch surf'n'turf on the hillside. These were free-range Protestants. Ralph used to get some of his best sportswear ideas during those afternoons.

But an evil wind had descended on the land, drying up stream beds, covering the swimming pools with an ugly layer of grit. George Plimpton complained that there were now more sand traps than water hazards on his private course. And the dust. The dust was everywhere—in the George III tulipwood and marquetry commodes, in the Chippendale dining-room sets, all about the Regency breakfront cabinets.

Day after day, Oscar heard of families leaving the county and heading East to the Vineyard or the Cape. Most of the arugula farms had been abandoned. They were a tribe of wandering nomads, the Arugulans, staying at the Pierre in New York one month and up in Newport the next. Sometimes Oscar dreamed of giving up too, saying goodbye to the currants and the merlots. But this was his land. He would die on this land (unless his Realtor could unload it on a software executive). So for now, Oscar de la Renta hung on. One man with courage, fortitude, and three closets full of tuxedos. Somewhere Willie Nelson was weeping.

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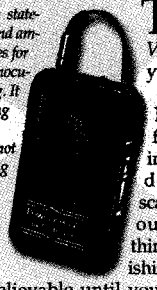

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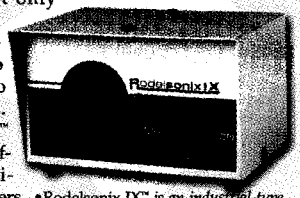

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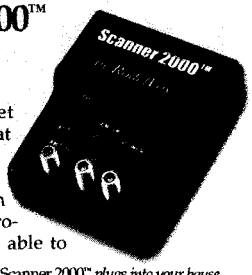

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